



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



32101 064788191

GILBERT
ELGAR'S
SON

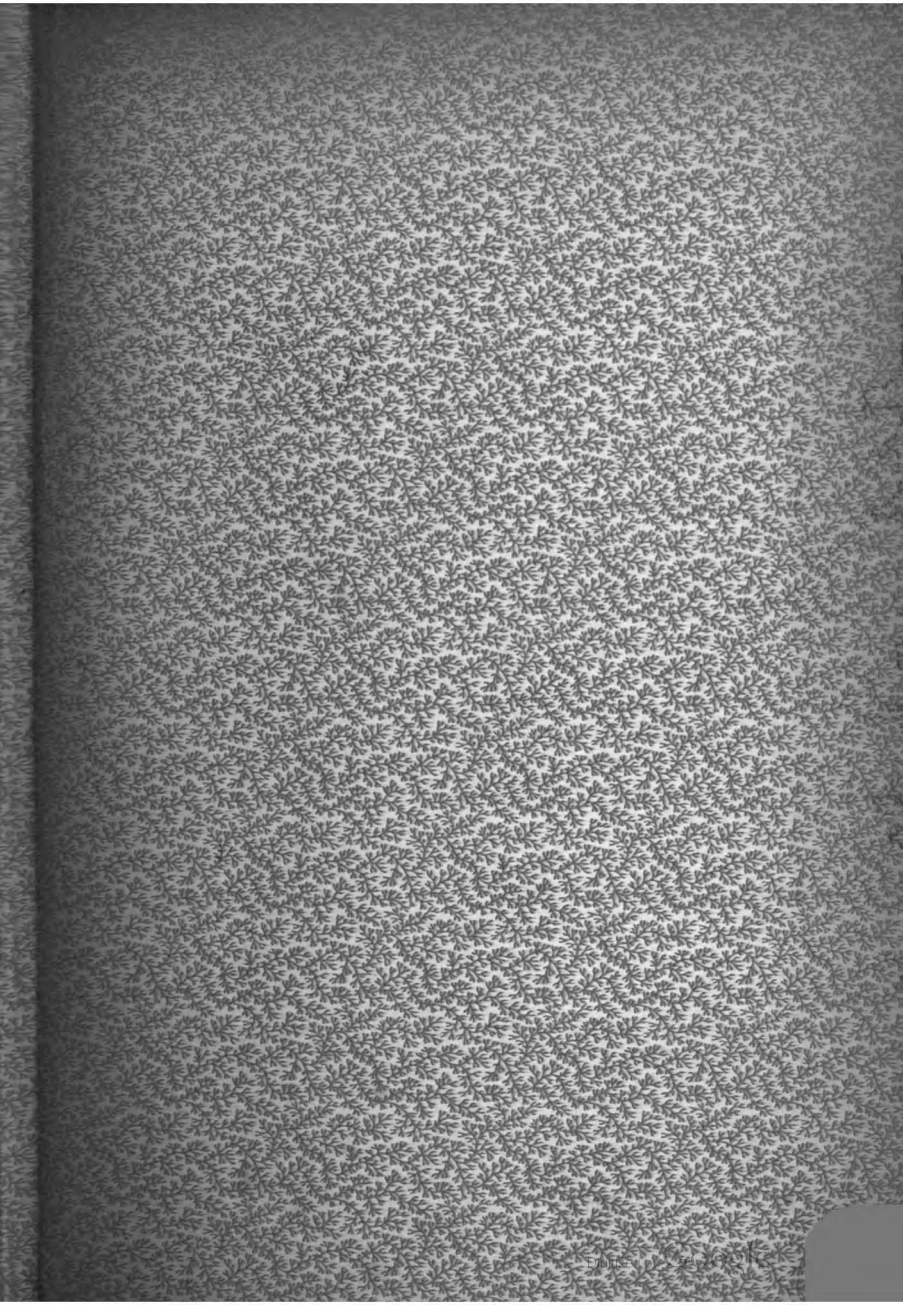
Library of



Princeton University.

Presented by

Mr Richard B. T. Roberts '32



Anna P. Chambers

Nov. 89

GILBERT ELGAR'S SON

BY

HARRIET RIDDLE DAVIS

"I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too."

Twelfth Night.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK

LONDON

27 WEST TWENTY-THIRD ST. 27 KING WILLIAM ST., STRAND

The Knickerbocker Press

1890

(RECAP)

3708

.745

.339

(Gilbert)

COPYRIGHTED 1890

BY

HARRIET R. DAVIS

The Knickerbocker Press, New York
Electrotyped, Printed, and Bound by
G. P. Putnam's Sons

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—A FIRST-DAY TRUANT	1
II.—AIRLIE	15
III.—AN ALIEN	32
IV.—GILBERT'S WORDS BEAR FRUIT	42
V.—BREAKING THE BAY COLT	53
VI.—BENDING THE TWIG	67
VII.—"SINCE I SAW YOU LAST THERE IS A CHANGE UPON YOU"	78
VIII.—FALLEN UPON EVIL DAYS	92
IX.—THE EVE OF CHRISTMAS	104
X.—"I WALK ALONE."— <i>Via Solitaria</i>	122
XI.—THE NEW MASTER OF AIRLIE	134
XII.—THE FIRST HARVEST	146
XIII.—UNDER THE NEW RULE	160
XIV.—JARED COMES "WITHIN THE MEASURE OF WRATH"	176
XV.—AWAY FROM HOME FOR NEWS	187
XVI.—DICK SHAPES HIS COURSE	204
XVII.—THE "HORTICULTURAL"	216
XVIII.—A STRANGER AT AIRLIE	229

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIX.—“PRESSED BEYOND HER FREEDOM”	245
XX.—DISQUIET	264
XXI.—A BOLD RESOLVE	275
XXII.—A COUSINLY FOOTING	288
XXIII.—THE FOX HUNT	296
XXIV.—FOOL’S MANOR	313
XXV.—OUTRIDING THE STORM	328
XXVI.—A NIGHT AT IVANWOLD	342
XXVII.—SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES	354
XXVIII.—THE POINT OF VIEW	367
XXIX.—“HAWKINS IS CALLIN’.”	385
XXX.—ROBIN FACES THE TRUTH	398
XXXI.—THE VILLAGE WEDDING	409
XXXII.—CONFESSION	421
XXXIII.—“WAS ’T NOT TO THIS END?”	436

GILBERT ELGAR'S SON.

CHAPTER I.

A FIRST-DAY TRUANT.

ON the edge of a historic wood, known in old Maryland days as Charlie Forest, stands a brick Meeting-House, weather-beaten and stained, showing upon its worn and weary face the imprint of many years. It is untouched by ornament, uncovered by vines, as old-fashioned as the day in which it was built, and quaint and restful as the community to which it belongs. It stands hushed and deserted in the warm June sunshine, doors and windows wide open, invitingly and expectantly. Only the borers break the stillness, as they buzz up and down the long porch, in search of the little cells they have so industriously made in the woodwork; occasionally finding their way through the open doors and windows, humming round the high-backed, cushionless benches, which in long empty rows "face the Meeting"; sometimes lighting on the top of the sheet-iron stove, with its dozen or more soapstones neatly piled on the

top, or inquisitively skimming along the edge of the wooden partition which divides the Meeting into two distinct parts, and then out again into the more attractive sunshine.

Far up the road which winds in and out among the trees comes a carriage, followed in a moment by another, and soon a procession of vehicles of all sorts and descriptions is seen approaching: buggies with and without tops, long-bodied daytons, light, springy carts, a few wagons with close canvas sides, and here and there an old-fashioned rockaway with its curtain flapping in the summer breeze. Among them all are some comfortably-appointed carriages and not a few well-mounted horsemen. Soon the hitching-posts are all full, and the later comers are forced to drive into the woods and fasten their horses to the trees. The Meeting-House porch is filled with a motley group of men and women, all lingering to exchange subdued greetings. The elder women, in their soft gowns of gray and drab, with folded kerchiefs and old-time drawn bonnets shading their sweet and placid faces, look like a flock of doves just alighted for a moment; while in striking contrast to them are the young women, in modern-cut gowns and stylish head-gear, though, as if not to depart too much from early training, there is evident care shown in the selection of colors. Among the men only two or three of the elders wear the large-brimmed hat and long coat of the Friends; the younger men being dressed very much as well-to-do

farmers usually are who are not very near and are quite indifferent to the centres of fashion. One by one they enter their respective doors, the men on one side, the women on the other, till the porch is nearly deserted.

At last a comfortable carriage, driven by a stalwart negro, draws up to the porch. An elderly man, well and carefully dressed, jumps out and helps a woman somewhat younger than himself to alight. Without being tall, she is somehow imposing-looking, in her stiff, full-skirted black silk gown, twisted silk shawl and plain straw bonnet. There bounds out behind her a little girl about ten years old, with clear gray eyes and bright red-brown hair, and dressed in a white frock and broad-brimmed straw hat. The mother, for mother and child they are, takes the little girl by the hand and hurries into the Meeting; the child holding back reluctantly and with lagging steps. They take one of the front seats facing the elders' benches, and just in front of the open side door. The little girl slips quickly to the end of the bench near the door, and the mother sits quietly farther away. There are a few straggling arrivals after this, a good deal of shuffling of feet from the men on the other side of the partition, and a few nervous, irrepressible coughs from the women; then an all-pervading silence falls and First-Day Meeting begins.

The silence was so intense, so deep, that the very springs of life seemed hushed. The rustle of the trees outside, or the whinny of an impatient horse, was the

only sound that broke the stillness. The little girl at the end of the bench sat very still for a long time. The top of her head came just a little above the top of the bench, and she gazed solemnly into the faces of the row of Friends who sat upon the benches on the platform. Finally she turned her eyes longingly out the open door at the green grass and the alluring trees, which seemed to wave and bend towards her. A big, brown robin lighted on the porch and wickedly hopped about, and, as if afraid to look too long at him, she gazed back at the row of Friends, and wondered if Friend Rush, in the corner, were really asleep, and if it were not time for Meeting to be over. Then she fell to counting the window-panes, but she could see only a few of the windows, and she dared not turn to count those behind her ; so she leaned forward and tried to catch a glimpse of her father across the Meeting. Suddenly an indistinct murmur broke the oppressive silence, a few disjointed words uttered without any one being able to locate them at once. Every one took advantage of the slight stir to draw a long breath and to secure a more comfortable position. Then Friend Rush demonstrated that she was not asleep. She opened her eyes, slowly untied her bonnet, laid it carefully beside her on the bench, rose, placed her hands on the rail in front of her, and, slightly swaying her body forward, commenced in a low and gentle voice, which as she proceeded became a sort of chant :

"There dwells in us a Holy Spirit who watches all our evil deeds, and who treats us according as we treat Him. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. If our heart condemn us not——"

Just at this sentence the little girl looked up with a quick side-glance at her mother, who was giving absorbed and serious attention to the remarks just begun ; then she glanced round as if to gauge the possibilities of detection from behind ; then fixing her gaze longingly on the open door, with its glimpse of sweet, cool green outside, she wavered a moment, and with a quick bound she was out the door, down the steps, and out of sight. The mother turned in surprise and made a movement to follow the vanishing child, but as if second thought checked her she settled back with a set look about the lips, and gave her attention again to the discourse, which went on uninterruptedly :

"——then have we confidence towards God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight."

Here the speaker paused, hesitated a moment, then sat down and quietly resumed her bonnet. The hush again fell upon the Meeting. Who ever knows the precise moment that inspires the elders of the Meeting to bring it to a close by a clasping of hands ? but just when it seems that the hour is destined never to end, and one

despairs of ever moving from the bench again, this welcome signal is given, and by common impulse the Meeting rises and moves slowly out upon the porch, where follows a brief time of cheerful greetings and conversation.

The mother of the little girl hurried to the door and out upon the side porch. Without heeding the several greetings addressed to her, she looked anxiously up and down the winding road, and even went a little way into the woods. Just as she was about to turn back she saw two figures emerging from the distant trees, a tall young man coming along with a swinging gait and a child hanging to his arm. He waved his hat, and when near enough called out in a bright, ringing voice :

“Don’t scold us, Aunt Dorothy.”

Aunt Dorothy’s anxious face relaxed almost into a smile at the sight of the handsome, boyish face, so eagerly begging indulgence for the child.

“Why, Richard, where did thee come from? I did not know thee was in the neighborhood, or even expected. How does thee do, and where did thee pick up this truant child of mine?”

As she spoke she put out her hand and took both of his, shaking them heartily.

“I came only last night, and thought I ’d ride over just about the time Meeting would be out, and catch you and Uncle Gilbert before you got away, when suddenly there popped up in the road before me this little

maid, who nearly frightened my horse into throwing me. I did not like to ride through the village with her, pillion-fashion, for fear of scandalizing the good people ; so I got Bobby Stokes to lead my horse round by the pike, and I struck across the woods with Robin, and here we are. So please say you are glad to see us."

"I am heartily glad to see thee, Richard, and am glad thee brought this runaway back. But, lad, how thee has grown ; thee will come home to dinner with us ?"

"Oh, do, Dick ; I want to show thee my new puppies."

"There, that will do, Robin ; let go of cousin Richard's hand and come at once. Father is waiting and will be impatient, and nearly every one is gone. Do thee come too, Richard."

"Thanks, dear aunt, I 'll ride up this afternoon ; but I really must dine at home my first day. Cousin Deborah would never forgive me if I did not. Oh, here 's uncle."

"Why, Dick, my boy, I 'm as glad to see thee as I 'd be to find a gold mine. Where did thee spring from ? Coming home with us ? No ? Why not ? Plenty of room in the carriage."

"Can't possibly do so, dear uncle ; I must go back to Ivanwold for dinner. I 'll ride up this afternoon, as I 've just told Aunt Dorothy ; so good-bye till then. Good-bye, Robin."

Meanwhile, Robin, who had held fast to Dick's hand all the time, now let go and said :

"Bend thy head down, Dick."

Dick bent his closely-cropped head, and Robin flung her arms around his neck and whispered :

"I 've saved the brown-and-white puppy for thee."

"Come, Robin, come. We must go." And the child was hurried away with last good-byes. The carriage door was shut, and father, mother and child were whirled away from the porch. Dick stood with head still bared in the sunshine looking after them. A smile hovered about his lips as he remembered Robin's escapade, knowing full well that though his aunt gave no reproof at the time to the truant, there was one, nevertheless, in store for her. His reflections were cut short, however, for the few people still left upon the porch caught sight of him, and hearty handshakes and greetings poured in upon him ; queries as to when he came, how long he would stay, followed rapidly upon each other, to all of which he replied frankly and cordially. There was something of courtliness and grace in his manner that savored of a world beyond the woods, and told of a training different from that of the work-a-day men about him. He finally beckoned to Bobby Stokes to bring up his horse, and swinging himself into the saddle, turned homeward, almost the last to leave the Meeting-House.

Meanwhile the carriage sped on its way, out of the woods, through the village, past the blacksmith's, past the store and the toll-gate, all silent in the dazzling sunshine. The road lay straight and white for a couple of miles,

dotted all the way along with old-fashioned farm-houses, surrounded with waving fields of wheat which stretched down to the roadside. Occasionally there was a more pretentious dwelling, with stately trees, well-kept lawn and imposing entrance, on which in distinct lettering could be read the name of the place and its owner. The road finally made an abrupt turn to the right, and for a mile extended through a scant wood ; then on again in a white stretch, bordered on one side by a thick and luxuriant hedge, beyond which in the distance clustered a village.

The carriage turned in at an opening in the hedge. A long lane, rich with sweet Indian grass, and bordered on each side of the driveway with locust trees heavy with the hanging bloom, led up to the rambling, picturesque house, of an indescribable faint-red color. A more irregular and antiquated pile could not be found in all Maryland. It was evident that when it was built it was intended for two distinct dwellings, and at a later day some genial owner had connected the two separate parts, making a most unique and picturesque whole. The main building was built, tradition says, of Queen Anne brick, brought from England in the old colonial days, when it was customary to bring brick over to the new country as ballast for the ships, which would carry back heavy cargoes of tobacco. This imposing and stately part of the house had a wide porch which extended all across the front. A broad entrance door, surrounded by many

little diamond panes of glass, opened into a square hall, in which was a spacious stairway with several landings. The other half of the house was built of wood, and was the opposite in every way to the more pretentious Queen Anne half. It was low, rambling and weird-looking, with a steep-pitched roof, grown over with moss, and many dormer windows looking out upon all sides. A high-peaked porch covered the entrance, which opened into a narrow, long passage, with many doors opening to right and left, and ending in a winding stairway. Outside, no shrubs nor flower-beds marred the effect of the soft, velvety turf which stretched everywhere, to the meadow on the right, to the brook and dairy on the left, and to the old-fashioned garden in the rear, surrounded by a hedge. The carriage-way only approached within a hundred feet of the house, where it made an abrupt turn towards the stables. At this turn was a flat, well-worn stepping-stone, and to this stone the carriage drew up.

The three miles which lay between the Meeting-House and Airlie had been traversed in silence. Robin felt the rebuke that was thus passed upon her. She had tried to slip her hand into her mother's, but meeting no response, had slipped it confidently into her father's, who held it fast, stroking it with his other, but speaking no word. As the carriage stopped there was a rush from the house, and two dogs tore over the grass to welcome the returning master. Robin made no effort to get out. After her parents had alighted, they awaited a moment; then Gilbert said :

"Come, my child."

"Father, may n't I ride to the stables with Kane?"

"No, thy mother has a few words to say to thee before dinner; so come."

Reluctantly she jumped out and followed her mother and father, stopping by the way to pat and kiss each of the dogs. Her father had settled himself in his arm-chair, which stood always in a sheltered corner of the porch, and where he had sat summer and winter for years, as his father had done before him; while on the window-sill, right by his side, were pipe and tobacco ready to his hand. Dorothea held the sitting-room door open for Robin, then it closed on mother and child. The room was large and divided at one end by folding-doors, which stood wide open. A heavy carved cornice supported the ceiling, and was matched by a chair-boarding of the same carving. A long mirror was between the front windows, divided into sections by gilt moulding. The spindle-legged furniture was of mahogany, with narrow lines of yellow inlaid wood. An old-fashioned work-table with brass knobs and a heavy bookcase stood upon one side of the room, while the big fireplace, filled in with feathery asparagus branches, was on the opposite side. On the high mantel shelf were tall silver candlesticks, with an elaborate white-and-gilt china vase standing between them. Muslin curtains at the windows let in the soft summer air. Dorothea slowly untied her bonnet and removed her shawl; then gently drew Robin to her side.

"Robin, why did thee mortify and grieve mother so in Meeting this morning?"

"Did I grieve thee? I did not mean to; but thee sees, when Friend Rush got up to speak—and thee knows, mother, that thee said thyself thee hoped she would not speak,—and when she said, 'If thy heart condemn thee not,' and I asked my heart if it would condemn me if I took just one little look out the door, and it said it would n't, so I slipped out."

"But, Robin, thee knows that every one saw thee, and it was a terrible disrespect to the Meeting."

"Well, perhaps they did n't see me very well, for thee knows my head did n't come up very high above the back of the bench; but it looked so cool out-of-doors, and the trees kept beckoning to me, and my namesake hopped up on the porch and said: 'Don't thee wish thee was out here? don't thee wish thee was out here?'"

"Thy namesake, child; whatever does thee mean?"

"Why, a robin-red-breast, mother; and he was so polite in asking me out that I could not help going; and he hopped all the way through the woods in front of me, till I found Cousin Dick, then he flew away."

"Oh, my child, what shall I do with thee? Where does thee get thy queer notions? thee is too old to behave so."

Dorothea got up, crossed the room to the book-case, opened a drawer and took out a small, well-worn brown book.

"Now listen, my child, to what the 'Book of Discipline' says. Is thee listening?" And she began to read :

" 'It is directed that those who come late to Meeting, or when there fall asleep, or are restless, or do not stay in the Meeting, but go forth unnecessarily, or otherwise behave themselves on those solemn occasions unbecoming our Holy profession, be treated with and seasonably admonished.' Now, Robin, thee would n't like to see mother mortified by having some of the Friends wait on thee from Monthly Meeting, would thee?"

"Oh, mother, surely they won't come and scold me?" And as if overcome at the terror of an admonishing committee, she flung her arms about her mother's neck and buried her face.

"No, child, I don't think they will; but if thee goes on doing so, and grows up showing such disrespect, they would have just cause for coming to thy father and me and admonishing us."

"Oh, mother, I 'll never do it again; I 'll be good next First-Day Meeting, only we won't sit by the door, will we?"

There was a twitching smile on Dorothea's lips at this naïve question.

"Now, Robin, what punishment does thee think I ought to give thee?"

"I don't know; we might ask father."

"No, I shall not ask father, it would be no punish-

ment at all ; but thee cannot go with father hunting Fourth-Day as thee had planned, nor indeed go at all for a month ; does thee hear ? ”

“ Yes, I hear, mother. If thee would only let me go Fourth-Day, I ’d try not to mind the rest. ”

“ No, it must be júst as I say. ”

“ Well, mother, I ’m glad thee did not say I should n’t see Cousin Dick this afternoon ; for then I would n’t be able to show him the puppies, as I promised. May I go now, mother ? ”

“ Yes, and mind thee what I have said. ”

Robin rushed out on the porch where her father was smoking.

“ Well, little one, is it over ? ”

“ Yes, but mother says I cannot go hunting with thee Fourth-Day, nor go at all for the rest of the month. Won’t thee beg me off, father dear ? ”

A broad smile broke over Gilbert Elgar’s face at this tragic announcement of Robin’s ; then gazing at her troubled, beseeching eyes, he encircled her with his arm, and laying his face close to hers, said gravely :

“ Remember, my little daughter, always to love and obey thy mother. She is the wisest and best friend thee and I have. ”

CHAPTER II.

AIRLIE.

AIRLIE, Gilbert Elgar's farm, was one of the oldest in Maryland. It was part of the original tract of land granted by the Lord Proprietary of the Province to the Quakers, who, driven from their homes beyond the sea, and persecuted in each successive state in the land of their adoption, finally found rest in the bosom of Maryland, almost the only state in that day willing to live and let live in the matter of religious tolerance. After George Fox had preached upon the cliffs of the Patuxent and upon the banks of the Severn, "giving utterance to the Spirit in words of fire, and with all the power of an apostle," it was only a little time before a community thus planted by him sprang up, grew and flourished. This was known as the "neighborhood" of Drayton, receiving its name from the birthplace of Fox. But by reason of another Drayton springing up in the State, the name of the neighborhood was changed from Drayton to the name by which Fox's old home is known to-day in England—Fenny Drayton, and of this same neighbor-

hood Airlie was to-day the chief ornament, being one of the largest and richest farms in the community.

Old John Elgar, Gilbert's forefather, had been among the earliest to follow Fox to this country. Not for worlds would he have shown to his fellow-settlers the wrench it was to him to give up home and family and pitch his tent in the wilds of the new country ; and the sweetest, dearest name in his heart was the name of his native Scotch village, Airlie. In time, as his new home became less and less wild, he brought out the name so dearly cherished in his memory, and gave it to the lonely, quaint home in the woods. In a few years a clustering village sprang up, just across the fields on the edge of the farm, and it, too, was called Airlie. In the long gap of years that lay between the simple, rude home in the woods and the picturesque Airlie of to-day, with its broad acres of perfectly-tilled land, its velvet turf and green hedges, nothing was left but its name to recall its primitive days.

Gilbert Elgar was a ruddy, stalwart man of fifty, having enough of this world's goods to be accounted rich among the Friends. He had always taken life easily. It was whispered in the neighborhood that in his younger days he had been inclined to be wild, but just how much that might mean among the Friends could not be determined. Certain it is that, Friend though he was, he had always been an indefatigable and rather hard rider to hounds. Next to his wife and little daughter,

his horse and his hounds were the dearest things to him. His greatest pleasure had always been to take Robin, when only a mite of a child, on his horse in front of him and with his dogs start off for a long chase through the country, till Robin had as keen an ear for the baying of the hounds as her father, and could tell as quickly as he from their tone just when the scent was hot or when they sighted the fox. Fox-hunting has ever been a favorite amusement in Maryland, and the Quakers were many of them as keen huntsmen as any in the State. Gilbert's father, although a much revered preacher in Friends Meeting, had been, incredible as it may seem, a devoted fox-hunter; and some of the old-time Friends, who were more cut-and-dried in orthodoxy, had been in early days a good deal scandalized at the idea of a Quaker giving so much time to fox-hunting—especially a preacher in Friends' Meeting. So the Monthly Meeting had had "concern on its mind," and Gilbert's father had been duly admonished, but without effect. As the years went on, and Gilbert himself followed in his father's footsteps, so far as hunting was concerned, the Meeting did not interfere. Gradually their forms and customs became so modified, and they departed so much from the old notions as to what were considered fitting amusements for Friends, that fox-hunting, dancing and even the theatre were no longer looked upon as offences. When in time Gilbert began to teach his little daughter to love hunting, it only occasioned a shaking of heads,

and it soon became a familiar sight to see him, with Robin seated on his saddle in front of him, or later trotting along on her own horse at his side.

Fox-hunting in Maryland was no dash across cultivated country. The fox-hunter had more long, hard riding to do than dangerous jumping, requiring endurance rather than daring horsemanship. His horse must have bottom above speed and agility, and with the top rails of the worm-fence thrown off it was comparatively easy for Robin, child though she was, to follow her father on his longest hunts, and she was his inseparable companion. Of late years Gilbert had given more time to hunting, and less and less attention to his farm. Instead of the long spring and summer days being spent in watchful attendance upon the farm hands and close scrutiny of the work accomplished, he would ride out under the shade of a tree and lazily watch for a time the corn-planting, the harvest, or wheat-sowing as the case might be, then slowly turn his horse towards Airlie village, where he would fall in with some of his kindred spirits, and spend several hours in discussing neighborhood events or the local politics of the county, leaving home affairs to Dorothea and Kane.

This growing indifference of Gilbert's was not lost upon Dorothea : it was becoming a source of anxiety and increasing pain to her. Cast in a sterner mould than her husband, and with a strength of purpose he did not possess, she gradually took upon her shoulders the respon-

sibilities that he shirked, and even a dullard could see that she was the controlling spirit at Airlie ; but so gentle and loving was her sway that not even Gilbert noticed that she had taken up the power he had laid down, nor guessed the heavy burden of responsibility borne by this strong, gentle, gray-eyed woman, whose firm step passed from the house to the dairy, from the dairy to the garden, smoke-house and barn, everywhere save to the stables and fields.

Kane knew and marked the increase of care upon his mistress' shoulders. Born and raised in the little log-house in the dairy field, he had always felt a half-proprietorship in the farm and all that belonged to it, and he had the same love and veneration for "Mister Gilbert" and "Miss Dorothy" that many of the slaves bore to their owners in the old plantation days. Kane had never been a slave, for of course neither Gilbert nor his father before him, nor any of the Friends in the neighborhood, had ever owned slaves since the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of 1772 had "borne testimony against slavery"; but many of the old Quaker homesteads of Fenny Drayton, that had been handed down from father to son, retained a few old-time negroes, who had been born and raised on the place, and continued to live with "their families," as they called them. Of such was Kane. He was muscular and vigorous, about forty years old, and with a certain shrewdness that marked him above the average of his race. He had many quaint

and curious turns of speech, which, while not amounting to dialect, were essentially negro. He was Gilbert's reliance, Dorothea's mainstay and Robin's special delight.

On the afternoon of the child's escapade at Meeting, Gilbert was in his usual corner of the porch, smoking his afternoon pipe. Adsum and Whack, two shepherd dogs, were lying in attitudes of semi-wakefulness, waiting for their master to take his usual First-Day tramp over the farm. They wagged their tails watchfully every time he chanced to move hand or foot. Gilbert, with his hat pulled down over his eyes, smoked on with no thought of them. His eyes were fixed upon the distant meadow, and there was a distinct frown upon his brow. From the whole expression of his face it was evident that some obstinate and unpleasant thoughts had found lodgment in his mind. He was so absorbed in his meditations that Dick had ridden up the lane and dismounted and the dogs had rushed out to meet him before Gilbert was roused from his corner. Instantly a bright look of pleasure chased away the frown. Rising up and knocking the ashes from his pipe, he hurried down the steps and across the grass to greet Dick.

Dick had been taught from his childhood to call Gilbert and Dorothea uncle and aunt, though they did not bear that relation to him, for his father, Henry Elgar, had been only a cousin of Gilbert's, but the tie between the two men had been more like that of brothers than cousins. They had grown up together and loved each other up to the day

that Henry had died, a disappointed, heart-broken man. Henry Elgar had married "out of Meeting," and when it had first become known that he was going to choose a wife from the outside world the usual remonstrance from the Friends' Meeting had followed as a matter of course, but to no avail, and he had been disowned. Had he chosen afterwards, upon proper acknowledgment of his fault, to be taken back into the Meeting, it would have been readily acquiesced in, but he never applied ; and his little son was taught to say "you" instead of "thee." It had been one of the never-solved mysteries why he had married the worldly, rich New England woman, who in the course of a few years transformed him from the happy man he had once been to the lonely, discontented man he died. The simple old farm-house in which Henry was born, and which had always been known as The Meadows, became in the hands of the rich wife as changed as he who owned it. The moss-grown, hipped roof became a mansard, bay-windows swelled out where once had been little diamond panes of glass, the low-roofed porches became conservatories, the wheat-fields, that had stretched their golden grain on all sides, became closely-clipped lawns ; the old garden, with its hollyhocks, sweet alyssum and old-fashioned china roses, was given into the hands of a landscape gardener ; and, lastly, the simple old name of "The Meadows" was changed for the high-sounding name of "Ivanwold." And with this last change, as if unable to bear any more, Henry Elgar died. Then his wife betook herself to her

own people, taking her little son with her. Thus it was that Dick had spent half of his boyhood days among very different surroundings. Some of the Friends appointed from the Monthly Meeting had made an effort to have Dick kept among the people of his father's faith, and to have him brought up "in Meeting," but the mother would brook no interference, only promising that Dick should spend his summers at Ivanwold. After a few years she too had died, and Dick found himself at twenty his own master, rich, and a senior at Harvard College, with all the world before him, and an ardent desire to see that world and take his place among men of culture and learning.

He was a goodly sight in Gilbert's eyes, as he swung himself to the ground ; and a sigh escaped him for the simple tragedy of Henry Elgar's life, of which no shadow seemed to rest upon the son.

"Well, Dick, my boy, I'd about given thee up, and was just going to start for a tramp over the farm. Will thee come too?"

"Yes, gladly. Let me speak first to Aunt Dorothy and Robin."

"I think Dorothea is having a nap, but here comes Robin."

"Oh, Dick, I thought thee was never coming. I am so glad to see thee, and so are the dogs ; they are wagging their tails off with delight. But how splendid thee is !"

"Splendid ! how so, little one ? But have n't you a kiss for Cousin Dick ? "

"There, Dick, and there, and one to grow on ! " And Robin kissed him emphatically three times over, then stood a little away and gazed admiringly at him.

"Father, why does n't thee have some shiny top-boots with spurs, and some knee-clothes, and a stick with a hook on it like Dick's ? "

"Why, child, how does thee think thy old father would look dressed up like a young buck ? "

"Thee 'd look most as good as Dick ; would n't he, Dick ? "

The two men broke into a hearty laugh, each held out a hand to the child, and the three turned towards the stables, followed by Adsum and Whack. They first visited the kennels where the hounds were, Robin leading the way, with great pride, to the young puppies. The Maryland fox-hound was not a beautiful animal to look at ; such tough work was expected of him that, in order to obtain an enduring and cunning beast, at some early day the English fox-hound had been crossed with the Irish stag-hound, and this, with an occasional alliance with the beagle, produced a keen, bow-legged-looking creature, quite a match for reynard.

"There, Dick, look ; are n't they beauties ? thee can have thy pick of them, though the one with the brown-and-white spots is the one I 've chosen for thee."

"Yes, they are beauties, little cousin," Dick said admiringly ; then, turning to his uncle, he asked :

"Why is there such a difference between Adsum and Whack ? Adsum seems a fine fellow, but Whack acts like a cur ?"

At this allusion to Whack, Gilbert began to shake with laughter and said :

"Tell him, Robin, about Whack."

"Thee sees, Dick, Whack was once butted over by a sheep, and he's never been any good since. Whenever Adsum drives up the sheep Whack runs and hides, and after all the sheep are in the fold then Whack comes out and wags his tail valiantly, and he does n't do a blessed thing from morning till night."

"Why not get rid of him, uncle ?"

"Oh, I like him, Dick ; he's original. Dorothea says he reminds her of me ; that Whack and I, whenever any work is going on, help just as the clown in the circus does."

They sauntered down the narrow back lane to where the fields of grain lay ripening for harvest. Dick looked admiringly at the waving fields which stretched before them, and turning to his uncle said :

"How splendid the whole farm looks."

Gilbert was leaning his arms on the top rail of the fence which separated the lane from the fields, and was gazing far away. At Dick's words he sighed :

"Does thee think so ? Somehow I fancy, Dick, that

things are running behind ; the crops don't seem quite so full as they used to be, and I sometimes wonder if the land is wearing out, and what is to become of it all when I 'm gone. Oh, Dick, if I only had a son like thee, a strong, broad-shouldered son, to step in now and carry on all this before it runs behind and goes down hill ! ”

Dick looked at Gilbert with startled eyes. Never had he heard him complain or speak in this strain before. Laying his hand affectionately on Gilbert's shoulder, he said :

“Are you in any difficulties, uncle ? You know all that I have and all that I am are yours.”

Robin was forgotten. She stood apart, mute and amazed, listening and looking from Dick to her father and from her father to Dick again.

“No, Dick, bless thee, I am in no really serious difficulties, but I feel as if they were looming up before me. I am sometimes troubled about the future ; I 've grown old and lazy and unable to keep the grip on things I used to have, but if I had a son it would be different.”

“But, uncle, you have Aunt Dorothy and Robin, and you have in Kane an efficient head-man, wholly devoted to you and to Airlie.”

“True, Dick, but thee sees a son would be here after me to inherit, to carry on, to perpetuate. Robin is only a girl, and a little one, who will grow up to a helpless womanhood as far as Airlie is concerned ; and I am getting old.”

Robin stood transfixed, taking in the half-bitter words her father had spoken, and, more than all, taking in his clouded, despondent face. Turning swiftly and silently she stole away unnoticed, back up the lane. She crept through a hole in the fence instead of springing over with a bound, her hat hanging round her neck by the strings, and her eyes blinded by tears. She sat down on a big stone to try to understand what she had heard. Finally, a bright thought struck her; she dashed away the tears, jumped up, swung open the gate into the dairy-field, and running all the way down the zigzag path, made a bound over the stream that flowed through the meadow and landed with a clatter among the cows and milk buckets, nearly upsetting a bucket of warm milk which Kane had just set down in a row with the others.

"Good Lord, child, what 's the matter with you? You mos' done scairt me to death. An' you look kin' o' mean-sperited an' low-live-li-like."

"Kane, aint girls just as good as boys?" And with her eyes shining like two stars with expectation, Robin turned a bucket upside down, sat down on it, resting her elbows on her knees and her face in her hands, and waited eagerly for Kane to speak.

"I don' jes' come to know what you mean, no how, Miss Rob."

"Aint girls and women just as much account in the world as boys and men?"

"Well, Miss, I don' jes' know what to say 'bout it. I

'low some people don' think wimen an' children much 'count nohow. Mought be they is, but they do tell of a paper some w'er's 'bout where wimen, children and idiots is kin' o' spoken together in a breath."

"I don't believe a word of it, Kane; no one would ever think of mother and little crazy Davy in the village in the same thought."

"Course not, Miss, they would n' dare to; Miss Dorothy's worth all the village pu' together."

"But, Kane, aint I just as much good on the farm as if I 'd been a boy?"

"Lord, yes, a darn' sight more. Miss Rob, if you 'd been your brother there had n' been nary a bird's nes' nor a cherry, nor nothin' on the whole place."

"There, I knew it; and Kane?" Robin thought for a long time in a puzzled way, then in a slow, hesitating voice she asked:

"I don't quite understand, Kane, why father is of more account than mother; what does he do at Airlie to make him so?"

"Well, you see, Miss, your pa, he hunts, an' he—well, Miss, he's your pa"; and Kane began to struggle in deep waters.

"Well, then, Kane, I don't see why mother, who does every thing, is of less use or account than father?"

"There ain' nothin' in the worl', Miss Rob, that makes your ma less 'coun' than your pa, an' no matter what nobody says, don' you b'lieve it, honey; she takes care o'

the whole pesky lot of us an' this yere farm to boot. Who 's been troublin' your min', honey ?”

Robin, who had been somewhat diverted by Kane's defence and support, now again reverted to her father's words. Her eyes filled with tears, and getting up from the bucket, she said :

“ I 'm going up to the house and ask mother all about it.” And off she started, hitting at the clover tops as she went along with a stick she had picked up. By the time she reached the gate the tears were running down her cheeks and dropping off in great splashes. Upon the other side of the gate stood Adsum waiting for her. He pushed his nose into her listless hand and looked up into her face in mute sympathy ; he followed her into the house, up the stairs, and when Robin burst into her mother's room he was still at her side.

“ Mother dear, why was n't I a boy ? ”

“ Why, my child, what is the trouble ? thee is crying.”

“ Mother, I want to be a boy. Father said he had no son to carry on things like Dick, and that I was only a girl, and that I 'd be helpless and no good to Airlie—Why will I be, mother ? ”

“ When did father say all this, Robin ? ”

“ Just now, down the lane near the wheat-field ; Dick and Adsum both heard him. What did he mean, mother ? ”

“ He did not mean any thing that need grieve thee, dear child ; father loves his little daughter too well, and when he comes in he will explain it all to thee.”

"But, mother, that won't change things, that won't make me a boy, and father wants a boy."

"No, that won't make thee a boy. Thee must know, Robin, father and I had a little son before thee was born, and when he died it was a great grief to us ; and I am sure father was only thinking of that when he spoke."

"Oh, mother, why has thee never told me about it before ? Are all those little clothes thee keeps in the cedar chest his ?"

"Yes, dear child."

"I always thought they were mine. Let me go, mother. Come, Adsum."

"Where is thee going, child ? I hear father's step." As Dorothea spoke Gilbert entered the room.

"Well, Robin, thee got tired of Dick and me, and so stole off up here ?"

Robin did not answer, but stood with downcast eyes.

"Gilbert, Robin has heard some words of thine which she has taken to heart ; thee must explain to her what thee meant. I will go down to Richard" ; and she left the room.

"What did thee hear father say that troubles thee, Robin ?" And Gilbert took the big arm-chair and drew the child to him. She hid her face in his coat and said in low tone :

"Tell me about the little boy thee had years ago." A look of pain came over Gilbert's face. Folding his arms about the child, he said tenderly :

"Many years ago, when mother and I were young people and first married, we had a little boy born, and as he grew and began to creep about mother and I thought there was nothing in the world like him. But he did not live, Robin, and our hearts were nearly broken. Then for eight or nine years we had nothing but his memory to gladden our hearts, till one early spring morning, father will never forget it, just when the first robins had come, thee came too ; and I called thee Robin in my heart. Finally I told mother I wanted to call thee Robin. She did not like it, but I said thee must be my little son as well as my little daughter. So mother consented, and from the time thee could first walk thee has gone with me everywhere. When father is away from thee he has thee ever first in his heart ; and when father said he had no son like cousin Dick, it was because he he was troubled in his mind about the farm and other things."

"Father, was it really because thee thought of me as thy boy that thee gave me a boy's name ?"

"Yes, Robin."

"And thee loves me as much as if I were thy son ?"

"More, my child."

Robin jumped down from her father's knee, drew her slight, childish form erect, and with flushed cheeks and shining eyes said solemnly :

"Then, father, I 'm going to be thy son, now and forever,"

Gilbert looked at her in surprise, and realizing that she was under strong excitement, he said to her in an every-day tone :

“ Very well, little one ; but there is mother calling us to tea ; wash thy face and smooth thy hair ; there, that is better ; now come.”

At the foot of the stairs they found Dorothea and Dick waiting for them. Dorothea glanced at father and child anxiously, and lingered till Dick and Robin had passed into the big old-fashioned dining-room ; then she said in a low tone :

“ Thee must be careful, Gilbert, how thee speaks when Robin is about ; she is a queer child, with queer fancies, and is much too imaginative.”

“ Do not worry, Dorothea, about her, she will forget all about it by to-morrow.”

“ I trust so.”

And they followed Robin and Dick.

CHAPTER III.

AN ALIEN.

THE soft, cloudless summer night which succeeds a warm June day has for the lover of the country a charm indescribable. Myriads of voices that have been mute during the long hours of the bright sunshine wake to life with the falling of the shadows and the dew, and curious are the sounds of the homely band that joyously sings and chirps through the short summer night, making a sort of nature's serenade to an accompaniment of rustling tree-tops. Gilbert and Dick sat smoking on the long porch in silence, listening to the medley of sounds that came from the chirping, winged, insect world, aided occasionally by the distant cry of the whip-poor-will. Supper had long been over. Robin had kissed them all good-night, including Dick and Adsum, her two prime favorites. Dorothea had gone up with the child to give her a last good-night and make sure that she was none the worse for her fancied troubles of the afternoon.

She returned after a short absence and joined the silent pair on the porch. She had been thinking all the

afternoon of Dick and his father, and of the old days before The Meadows became so grand. It had been one of the places dear to her heart, years ago. She saw herself, a mere slip of a girl, going across the fields and over the stile ; sometimes alone, sometimes with Deborah, and, dearer still, sometimes with Gilbert, to take tea with Cousin Rebecca, Henry's mother. She remembered Deborah as she had been in the old days, a witty, quick-tempered girl, who, it had been whispered about through the neighborhood, had cared for Henry and might have married him, but for the blight of cousinship. Then she thought of the lonely, sharp-voiced, energetic Deborah of to-day, who after Dick's mother's death had been asked to take up her abode and rule at Ivanwold, until Dick should choose to bring home a wife. Then, whimsically enough, she thought of the absurd feud that had existed between Deborah and Gilbert, who for the last three years had never spoken a word to each other directly, but who whipped each other smartly over other people's backs whenever they chanced to be in the vicinity of each other, and all because of a difference. Finally, her thoughts came back to Dick himself ; his wonderful resemblance to his father : the same crisp sunny hair, which but for the absurd fashion of clipping so short would curl like Henry's, the same bright blue eyes and ruddy skin. Dorothea had always had for Dick a tender affection. The thought that he might drift away from them as he grew older was one that caused her

much uneasiness. She was afraid that the memory of his father was too dim to be a strong enough tie to bind him to the neighborhood, its spirit and its teachings. She distinctly felt that his mother's wealth and the ambition and worldliness imbibed from her might develop in him and make it impossible for him to settle down at Ivanwold contentedly. She did not much wonder that Dick showed little attachment for the place, for it had never been any thing like a home, in her opinion, after his mother's wealth had transformed it, and neither she nor Gilbert ever went there nowadays, if they could help it. At last Dorothea broke the long silence :

"Richard, how is Deborah getting on at Ivanwold ? Does she seem contented with the new home ?"

"She seems perfectly contented, aunt. Cousin Deb is the most active, driving woman I ever saw, and though she has been there only a few months, she seems to have the reins thoroughly in her hands."

"She will remain, I suppose, till thee brings home a wife, Richard ?"

"Well, Aunt Dorothy, I don't know about a wife, or whether I shall even live at Ivanwold much of the time. I have been thinking that perhaps I might as well sell the place some day."

There was a painful silence after Dick had spoken. Dorothea realized with a sinking heart that Dick was lost to them already, that any effort to keep a hold upon him would be vain.

"Does thee mean, Richard, that thee will actually sell the home that thy father loved, the home that he and thee were born in, the home that, years ago, thy grandfather worked so hard to make for thee and thine?"

"Don't put it that way, aunt. Mother—Yes, I know, Aunt Dorothy, you never had any opinion of mother, but I must speak of her. You know Ivanwold was left unconditionally to her, and she meant to sell it before she died. You know I have never really lived at Ivanwold since father's death. I never knew much of the place until after it was remodelled, so that the associations so dear to you and uncle are little to me. If father had lived till I grew up it would have been a different matter; I would probably have had a deep and lasting attachment for the place. But as it is it seems unutterably dreary to me, and not in the least like home. I feel that I can never settle there permanently; my work and life will be out in the world, and you know a place like Ivanwold cannot go on year after year with no master."

"Then, Dick," broke in Gilbert in a loud, impatient voice, "do we understand that thee means to cut loose from the Society of Friends among whom thee was born? that thee means to cast off entirely thy father, who was born a Quaker and who never renounced the Spirit, no matter how much he departed from its teachings? Has thee forgotten that it was his dying wish that thee should keep some hold upon the neighborhood, that thee should spend half thy time here?"

"No, uncle, I have not forgotten it ; there can be no talk of my renouncing the Society of Friends, because I never belonged to it ; for surely you must bear in mind that at the time father and mother were married the Meeting was very censorious ; it carried out its very severest measure in disowning father, all because mother was not a Friend and because they were married by a minister of the gospel. You must not forget their action in the matter simply because times have changed, and because this old rule is no longer observed. You know father never made any effort to be taken back or to have me brought up in Meeting. He died outside its pale. I have grown up, in consequence, very differently. I cannot think I am to be blamed for this. Surely, you must know that nothing can ever shake my love for you and Aunt Dorothy, or make me loosen one jot the tie that binds me to you. Why, Aunt Dorothy, you are the only person in all the world, not even excepting my mother were she living, to whom I always turn, to whom as a boy I could always tell any boyish mischief and be sure of gentle forgiveness."

Dick had spoken with considerable heat and with evident feeling, but in spite of it his words sounded selfish to other ears.

"But, Richard," Dorothea said anxiously, "thee is going out into the world ; thee says thee is going to sell thy home ; how can the tie be kept, save in Gilbert's and my heart ? Thee will have friends in the great

world, thee will make new ties, and this little green spot here in Maryland where thy father and thy race lie buried will be forgotten. It has ever been so since the world began."

"Of course, Aunt Dorothy, you and uncle must not get an idea that I am going to do any thing rash. I have made no definite plan, and by the terms of mother's will I can do nothing for several years yet."

"What are thy plans for the future, beyond selling Ivanwold?" Gilbert asked abruptly.

"Well, uncle, after I am graduated, which will be in a year from now, I have an idea of going abroad for a few years. I find my taste and desire are towards science, and I may go to Heidelberg to study under Rosenbusch."

"And who is Rosenbusch, may I ask?"

"He is one of the great living authorities upon a certain branch of geology."

"And after Rosenbusch, what then?"

"Why, I should hope to go into the field, and would be prepared for any work in that line."

"And, Richard, will thee grow up to manhood and old age with no Christian faith? If thee cuts loose from all old ties, what safety is there for thee, tempted as thee will be by the world?"

"Aunt Dorothy, I go to my mother's church, but if you mean to ask if I am ever likely to join the Friends Meeting, my answer is emphatically, never. Quakerism is beautiful for the women in the community, but it is a

devilish hard grind on the men. I beg your pardon, I mean no disrespect to you and uncle by speaking so strongly, but when I look about upon the young men here in the neighborhood, there is hardly a real go-ahead man among them, and scarcely one whose mother or sister is not his superior in culture."

"Oh, my boy, how rashly thee judges, and thee speaks beyond thy knowledge ; but I know the uselessness of words : nothing was ever gained by talking when the gulf to be crossed is as wide and as deep as this, but I trust thy hot words only spring from the thoughtlessness of youth. When thee is older thee may think differently. But for the sake of thy dear father, whom we both loved, and for the memories that cluster about The Meadows, do not, I beg of thee, part with the old home. Keep it ; in years to come it may prove a refuge to thee and thine."

Dick rose. The conversation had lasted a long time and the night was late. As they stood for a moment under the eaves at parting, they were subdued and sad. Dick bent and kissed his aunt gently, and said in a low tone :

"Don't think hard of your boy, Aunt Dorothy."

"I never could do that, Richard " ; and they parted.

Gilbert went out with him in silence to where his horse was tied ; the two men grasped hands for a silent moment, then Dick mounted and clattered down the lane, his horse's hoofs resounding on the pike long after

Dorothea and Gilbert had entered the house. As they went into the sitting-room Dorothea laid her hand on Gilbert's arm and said :

"We have lost our boy, Gilbert."

"Yes, wife, we have lost him ; what could we expect ? Oh, the mischief that miserable woman has done ! She came here to our peaceful neighborhood, alienated Henry from his friends, set everybody by the ears, nagged and worried him into his grave, and finally planted in that boy's heart the seeds of selfishness and worldliness."

"Hush, Gilbert ; it is wicked to speak such words of the dead. We must accept what is, and make what we can of the living."

"Dorothea, next to thee and Robin Dick is the dearest thing to me. Before Henry died he said to me, 'Bert'—thee knows, Dorothea, that was my name from the time we were boys together—'Bert, I leave Dick in thy care ; keep him as much with thee as thee can ; I have done wrong in not asserting my influence and the influence of my people over him, but he is young ; his mother promises he shall spend half of his time here in Fenny Drayton. Do thee try, Bert, to make a simple, manly man of him' ; and now," continued Gilbert, with rising emotion, "he comes back, and the first step he talks of taking when he has the power is to sell, to sell the home his father and grandfather were born in. The selfish young dog ! It is enough to make Henry turn in his grave."

"Gilbert, thee will think differently after a while ; we shall lose all influence over him if we show anger towards him. Remember how young he is ; Richard's heart is in the right place, let us keep his love and we can do much with him " ; and as she spoke she began to straighten the room for the night, while Gilbert seemed lost in thought.

" There is something else I wish to speak about, Gilbert ; I am worried about Robin."

" In what way ? "

" She is so full of queer fancies, and has such an old head on her shoulders, and she takes every thing so seriously to heart. I am afraid we are not wise in our way of raising her. She rushed in to-day in an agony of distress because she was not a boy. She had heard thee saying something to Richard ; what was it ? "

" Nothing much. I only gave expression to my old lament at our having no son, and I forgot the child was there to hear. I went down to the dairy afterwards to show Dick our new deep-water troughs, and Kane said she 'd been down there having a famous argument with him about the superiority of boys, and Kane seemed mightily tickled over it ; he remarked to me with a chuckle that ' Miss Rob was more peart and keen to go than any child he ever had set eyes on.' Then when I came up here I saw something was up, and after thee went down to Dick I explained as well as I could to Robin that after we had lost our boy I had called her Robin because she was both son and daughter, and it seemed to comfort her wonderfully."

"Oh, Gilbert, how could thee be so injudicious as to tell her such a thing? It may put some strange notion into her head that she will never get over. I ought never to have let thee give her such an outlandish name."

"Pshaw, Dorothea; as usual, thee 's climbed a hill before thee has reached it. The child is all right; a bit imaginative at times, but I like it; let her alone, she 's as sound as a nut. If it should please her to fancy herself a boy, where 's the harm? Mark my words, she 'll make a remarkable woman some day, and she 'll be, besides, the bonniest girl in all old Maryland."

"I only trust it may be so."

There was a pause; then Gilbert and Dorothea sat with folded hands and down-bent heads, in silent grace.

CHAPTER IV.

GILBERT'S WORDS BEAR FRUIT.

SECOND-DAY morning dawned bright and warm, and, as was the custom each morning, Robin was made ready for school. She had looked very sedate and grave all through breakfast ; her gray eyes had been fixed again and again upon her father's face, only to look away if there seemed a chance of attracting his notice. The two-wheeled cart, with Kane for driver, stood at the stepping-stone ready for her. She slowly put her books into an old baize satchel, tied on her hat, picked up the little lunch-basket which contained her mid-day dinner and trudged out to the cart. They jolted and swung along over the same road they had traversed the day before coming from Meeting, for "Charlie Forest," with its historic branches, its dense shade and thick underbrush, had sheltered for fifty years the little unpainted, peaked-roofed school-house with its play-ground, as well as the Meeting-house with its enclosed ground for the dead. Robin had been a little late in starting from home that morning, and when they

stopped before the school-house door it was evident from the rise and fall of voices in unison that the first exercises of the day had begun. She hurried in and Kane drove rapidly home.

Several hours later, just as the great bell at Airlie had struck the noon hour, Dorothea, who had come out on the porch to rest a moment, saw a small speck far down the distant lane. She went to the steps and shaded her eyes with her hands. It was surely a child, coming slowly and wearily towards the house. She waited a moment to be sure, then stepped quickly over the soft grass. It was Robin, with her satchel dragging along in one hand, her lunch-basket untouched in the other ; her shoes white with the dust of the long, tedious three miles, her hair disordered and in damp rings on her heated forehead, from which her hat had been pushed to the back of her head ; but in spite of the weary gait, the heated, exhausted appearance of the little figure, there was an undaunted, resolute air about her as she met her mother's amazed and startled eyes.

"What ever is thee home again for at this hour? how did thee get here? was school dismissed?"

"No, mother, school was not dismissed; I have come home to stay."

"Has thee misbehaved, was thee sent home?"

"No, I just came of myself, mother."

"Thee walked all the way, alone, through the heat and dust?"

"Yes, mother."

"Come into the house with me." Dorothea took the satchel and lunch-basket from the child and hurried into the house. Robin followed with lagging, tired steps. Dorothea stepped to the open door at the other end of the wide hall and called :

"Gilbert ! Gilbert !" but no one replied.

Then she went to the kitchen and told Joppa, one of the women, to "go to the village and ask Mr. Gilbert to step down immediately." She then hurried back to the porch, where Robin sat dejectedly in her father's chair in the corner.

"Come into the sitting-room, Robin ; it is too hot out here." She took off the child's hat and dusty shoes, wiped off her heated little face and pushed back the damp hair with cool, gentle fingers.

"I want some water, mother."

"Thee must not have any water as heated as thee is ; I will get some pounded ice for thee ; lie there on the sofa and rest ; thee must not try to tell what has happened till father comes."

Dorothea softly closed the door and left the child in the half-darkened room. She lay there a long time, so long, indeed, that when she awoke from a nap and found her mother patiently fanning her she sat bolt upright, looked about confusedly, and said in a puzzled way :

"Is it yesterday in the afternoon or is it to-morrow morning, mother ?"

Not knowing how to reply to this not very lucid question, Dorothea ignored it and said :

"Now, my child, thee must tell us why thee came home from school in such an extraordinary way." As she spoke Dorothea stepped to the door and called Gilbert. The child looked half-frightened as her parents confronted her so gravely, but soon the same resolute look that she had worn when she trudged up the dusty lane came into her eyes, her grievances rushed into her mind and she began in a half-defiant tone :

"It was no use to stay in school. I don't like it, and I do not want ever to go there again."

"Why does n't thee like school? thee has been so happy there all the winter and spring ; what has changed thee ? "

"Well, father, look at my books ; Cousin Dick does n't study out of such books at his school ;" and Robin eagerly picked up the satchel which her mother had hastily dropped in a chair, and pulled out a well-thumbed, dog-eared, yellow-covered spelling-book, compiled by a good old Friend many years ago.

"Now, father, Dick's books don't have this in them, for I asked him, and he told me so " ; and she began to read in an eager voice :

"We had a red cow, and a fat pig. Ann and Jane spell their lessons well, they will soon learn to read and to spell out of books as well as in " ; and she gazed contemptuously at the book.

"But, Robin, Richard had to read and spell out of such a book when he was little like thee."

"But, mother, he never went to school in Fenny Drayton ; he never had a hateful yellow spelling-book, and the teacher did n't call him 'Robina,' which thee knows is n't my name ; and I want to grow up just like Dick. I want to study big books like his, and have short curly hair, and a stick with a hook on it, when I go hunting."

"But, Robin, thee will never have short curly hair like Richard's, because he is a grown man, while thee is a little girl."

"No, mother, no, I 'm not a little girl any more ; I 'm thine and father's little boy. I am going to grow up a man, to take care of thee and father, and the farm and dogs and every thing, and I am not going to school any more down there where they sing their lessons to a tune, and where the teacher calls me 'Robina.'"

She began to sob as if her heart would break, as she buried her hot little face in the worsted sofa pillow. Dorothea and Gilbert exchanged glances. Gilbert shook his head in bewilderment at the situation. Dorothea spoke in an undertone :

"I fear me I will have no easy task to undo thy work and pluck up the seeds thee has sown in her mind ; thee had best leave me to deal with her now."

"Why did thee send for me at all ?"

"Because I shall need thee. I never thought of things taking this turn, and the child must first be soothed and

then reasoned with. I can best manage that, but do not go out of call, for thee will have to go and explain Robin's absence to the teacher."

Gilbert went out to his refuge on the porch, and Dorothea led the tired, excited child up-stairs, talking soothingly and cheerfully of all sorts of things. She undressed her and put her on her cool little bed in the room adjoining her own, then went down and with her own hands prepared some dinner for her and carried it up, after which she stayed quietly until the fatigue and exhaustion of the long, dusty, hot walk had made Robin sink into a deep sleep in which her longings to be a boy, and to have curls like Cousin Dick's, were forgotten.

Meantime a long talk between the parents ensued. It was decided that, as the village school would close for the summer in the course of a week or two, Robin should not be sent back. By the time the autumn term began she would doubtless have recovered from her grievances and would have forgotten her father's words on First-Day, which were at the bottom of it all. Dorothea alone knew and realized what an impressionable and sensitive nature Robin possessed. She remembered that many little things idly spoken by herself and Gilbert were often brought out and questioned by Robin, months afterwards, showing a peculiar tenacity of mind unusual in a child ; and the mother felt that it would take time to uproot the idea that had taken possession of her during the last twenty-four hours.

The next few days passed tranquilly. Robin was a trifle languid, and showed very little interest in any thing, but her mother attributed it to the over-exertion of the long walk. She was tempted to revoke her decision about hunting, but then she reflected that obedience must be taught at all hazards, and that it would not do to pass over Robin's behavior at Meeting on First-Day ; so she tried to devise new interests for the child. She took her to the dairy with her, and let her make innumerable pats of butter, and laughed heartily with Robin when it was discovered that she had forgotten the salt. In a day or two Dorothea began to feel that her plan of keeping the child by her side day and night was succeeding, and that she had not taken things so seriously as had been fancied.

The weather, which had been bright and warm, suddenly changed ; a cold rain set in, the chickens stood about under the sheds and porches, in drooping, dragged condition, and Whack safely housed himself, leaving Adsum to shake off the rain as best he could when he drove up the cows and sheep. The brilliant June roses had been beaten down by the pitiless downpour, and their bright leaves lay scattered all over the dripping, sodden garden. The young turkeys which had just hatched were brought into the house and were huddled in a soft, twittering mass in the bottom of an old basket in the outer kitchen. Dorothea was absorbed, with the help of Joppa, in trying to save the lives of some young ducks

which had been found complacently and placidly drowning, their heads turned up to the sky and mouths wide open drinking in the heavy rain-drops after the manner of their kind. So intent was she on her work that Robin was forgotten. The child was lying full-length on the rug in front of a crackling fire in the sitting-room, her elbows resting upon the floor and supporting her face. She was staring into the fire, watching the little tongues of flame wrap themselves round each stick in the big fire-place. She saw with delight how brightly and easily they burned.

The dancing flames seemed to suggest some thought to her, for the delight died out of her face, she became grave and preoccupied and drew herself to a sitting posture, with her hands clasped round her knees. Finally she rose, and so intent was she that she did not hear Adsum scratching at the door to come in. She went softly across to the old wooden part of the house and tiptoed down the narrow passage and up the winding stairs till she reached the attic. This attic extended over the whole of the wooden end of the house. It was an immense room, with eight dormer windows, which in pleasant weather let in a flood of light. It looked bright and cheerful even on this dark, rainy day. It was evident that it had been given over to Robin for a play-room. All manner of toys in more or less advanced stages of decrepitude were to be seen, not scattered about as most children's toys are, but arranged in precise order.

One end of the room was finished off with Kane's rude carpentering into a playhouse. Robin gazed all about her lovingly. She looked over every toy, and gazed long and tenderly into the staring, unmeaning faces of several dolls in their various stiff-jointed attitudes. She counted them all over to see that they were all there ; then she singled out one, an old-fashioned plaster-of-Paris baby with its head on a pivot, so that it would turn and even wobble about. This she dressed anew and kissed lovingly, then hung it over her shoulder and proceeded to the short ladder which led up to a loft over the attic. She climbed up, pushed aside the trap-door, and thrust the doll through the opening as far as she could. Then hurriedly scrambling down, she gathered up in the skirt of her frock the remaining dolls, together with all the rest of her toys, and with a hasty parting look she hurried back to the sitting-room, where, without a pause, she flung them all in upon the burning logs, which flashed up into new life at this addition. She stood in a grim attitude and watched them curl up and crackle.

As the last distinguishing thing about them disappeared, a tremulousness of the whole slight figure betrayed that she was not unmoved, and that some well-defined resolve, rather than childish caprice, had caused the wholesale destruction of what had been one of her chief delights. She was at last distracted from the flames by Adsum, who had added a low, entreating whine to the scratching at the door. Robin let him in, and as

he shook the rain from his shaggy back and lay down before the fire, she threw her arms about his neck and sobbingly told him what she had done ; but she impressed upon him that it was a profound secret from mother ; she should not tell any one but him about it, and he must not tell any one, nor even look knowing, nor wag his tail when it was found out. As if he understood all she said, he emphasized each of her pauses by a thump of his tail on the floor in token that he would guard her secret.

Several days later when Dorothea slowly mounted the stairs to the attic, followed by Joppa laden with cedar branches which were to be packed away with winter garments in chests that stood in a row against the low attic wall, she noticed at once the change in the appearance of the room. Nothing remained of the playhouse but the bare boards ; not a doll, not a toy was to be seen, save one or two old-time toys that had belonged to Gilbert himself when a child. She questioned Joppa about it, but Joppa did not know what had become of " Miss Rob's things." Dorothea, with suspicion fast gathering in her face, went down and searched out Robin, whom she found disconsolately twisting and untwisting herself in the rope swing that was hung to the bough of an old pear-tree in the garden. In answer to her mother's query as to what she was doing, she said she " was letting the old cat die." Dorothea called her to her and said :

"Robin, where are all thy playthings gone that were in the attic?"

"Don't ask me, mother."

"But mother wants to know where they are. Where are all thy dolls?"

"I can't tell thee any thing, mother; Adsum is the only one who knows, but he promised not to tell"; and her lip quivered.

"But I insist upon thee telling me what thee did with them."

"Oh, mother, they are all dead, and I cannot bear it"; and, overcome with the recollection of the devouring fire and her own deed of destruction, she hung her head and tears trickled down her cheeks and dropped off like so many big rain-drops.

Dorothea waited a moment, but the child kept silence, only showing that she was not unmoved by the sobs which shook her. The mother, ever wise where her child was concerned, forebore to press any further questions. She was discouraged, for she recognized that Robin had not forgotten one jot the idea that had taken possession of her: she had deliberately destroyed her dolls with the idea of putting herself away, and as a first step towards growing up a man and looking like Cousin Dick.

CHAPTER V.

BREAKING THE BAY COLT.

DOROTHEA had a worried, sleepless night over her little daughter's strange behavior. She grieved to think that with the putting away of the dolls the early childish days were forever gone. She blamed herself for not having thrown Robin more with children of her own age, and in the long hours of the silent night she tried to devise some plan to turn the child's mind effectually into a bright, new channel. She thought of the many children growing up in the neighborhood, all more or less distantly connected with Airlie ; for the Friends were a close community and had intermarried to a great extent, and nearly every one was a cousin near or remote, or a cousin by courtesy and custom when no real tie existed. Dorothea thought that she might throw Robin more with these children, or it might be a good plan to try what change would do ; she might go to Quarterly-Meeting at Deerfoot and take Robin with her ; there were plenty of children at Deerfoot ; and yet she remembered with a pang that the child never seemed to

feel at home with other children, and always returned to her side when among them. Confused with these thoughts she at last fell asleep.

But the next morning the matter arranged itself. After breakfast, Dorothea had just unfolded her plan of going to the Deerfoot Quarterly - Meeting and taking Robin with her when they were interrupted by the appearance of Dick, driving up the lane in his new cart, which had just been sent from town. Neither Dorothea nor Gilbert had treasured up any ill-feeling towards Dick because of the conversation of the few nights previous. However selfish and heartless his words had struck them at the time, the feeling had not been nursed against him, and it was with the same warm-hearted greeting that they went out to meet him. They inspected the new cart, the like of which had not been seen in the neighborhood before. Robin walked all around it, taking it in from all points.

"Is n't it a dandy, Robin?" Dick said.

Robin looked from the cart to Dick, whom she eyed with grave attention.

"Well, Cousin Dick, it is n't so much of a dandy as thee is, but I like it. May n't I have a ride with thee?"

"Yes, little woman, I've come expressly for you. Aunt Dolly, I want you to lend Robin to me for several days. Cousin Deb says she will take beautiful care of her; she shall sleep in Cousin Deb's room and we won't let her out of our sight. Will you come, Rob?"

"Oh, Cousin Dick!" was all the child could say, as she clasped her hands and turned entreatingly to her mother.

Dorothea looked at the flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, and felt that no better solution of the difficulty in her mind could possibly have offered itself ; but, as was always her custom, she turned to Gilbert for his opinion.

"What does thee think, Gilbert?"

"It is just the thing, Dorothea."

"Then I may go, mother?" breathlessly asked Robin ; and without waiting for a reply she went on : "Oh, Dick, I love thee ; it was just like thee to think of me."

"That 's right, little woman ; I 'm going to break the three-year-old bay colt, which you shall name."

"Richard, thee must be careful of Robin and not let her go into the field with thee when thee breaks the colt ; and I want to say something seriously to thee, Richard."

"All right, Aunt Dolly ; just so you don't take away the little maid from me. It is deucedly lonely at Ivan-wold.

"Now, Richard, I 've told thee before that I cannot permit thee to call me Aunt Dolly ; it is frivolous and disrespectful to a woman of my years."

"A woman of your years, Aunt Dolly?" and Dick emphasized "Dolly," "why you have n't a line in your face, nor a gray hair on your head, and you are the sweetest aunt a fellow ever had." With that Dick lifted Dorothea off her feet in his strong arms, and did not

release her till he deposited her gently on the porch. Dorothea looked indignant at the prank, and said reprovingly :

"Richard, it is not becoming in thee to treat me with so little dignity ; I despair of thee ever growing up to be a man ; thee will be a boy all the days of thy life, if thee is six feet."

"Oh, mother, thee looked so funny when Dick picked thee up ; I never knew thee was little before."

"Come, Dorothea, if Robin is to go back with Dick thee 'd better put up some things for her," interrupted Gilbert. "Can thee carry any thing in that top-heavy-looking concern of thine, Dick ?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, any amount of pinafores, Uncle Gilbert."

"How long does thee want Robin to stay, Richard ? we cannot spare her very long."

"Well let me see, this is Wednesday ; let me keep her until Sunday and you and aunt drive down after Meeting, take dinner with us, and bring Robin back in the afternoon."

"But, Dick, how can Deborah and I ever get through a dinner together ? it will surely be a case of the Kilkenney cats ; Deborah has n't spoken to me in three years."

"Never mind, uncle, come, and the rest of us will enjoy the fun. We 'll agree to interfere if you come to blows."

So the matter was left. Joppa was sent to the attic to hunt up an old-fashioned carpet-bag, in which were

folded a clean frock or two, and with a note from Dorothea to Deborah stowed away in Dick's pocket, the preparations were complete. At the last moment Robin was missing, and not till both mother and father had called her loudly did she appear, explaining that she could not go without telling Kane good-bye, and kissing and whispering last messages to Adsum. At last Dick swung her up to the high seat, and with the bag stowed away under their feet, they started off at such a pace that Robin had to grasp her hat with both hands to keep it from being blown away. Her parents stood and watched them till they turned into the pike and were lost to view.

The drive to Ivanwold was all too short to the child, who enjoyed the high seat, the swaying motion, and the importance of being at Cousin Dick's side. It had seemed only a moment since they started when Dick jumped her to the ground and left her before the broad stone steps, and she sighed to think it was so soon over. Deborah came hurrying through the hall. Her plain, homely face lighted up at sight of the child, whom she kissed heartily, exclaiming :

" Goodness, child ! how much thee is growing like thy mother."

" Oh, Cousin Deb, does thee think so ? I want to look just like Cousin Dick. Does thee think I will when I grow up, if I try hard ? "

" Well, I can't tell yet ; we 'll have to wait and see. I 'd rather a vast sight thee looked like thy mother than

like all the handsome Cousin Dicks put together. Why on earth does thee fancy looking like Dick so much ? ”

“ Well, Cousin Deb, he ’s so big and bonny, and his eyes are so blue and bright, and he ’s so gentle. I think he and Adsum are the two nicest people I know.”

“ Oh, thee does ; and where do the rest of us come in ? After Dick and Adsum, I suppose ? ”

“ Well, Cousin Deb, of course mother and father are the best in all the world, then come Dick, Adsum, Kane, and thee.”

“ Fathers above us, was there ever such a child ! ” and Deborah untied the hat from the child’s head, secretly tickled at the position she occupied among Robin’s favorites.

“ Come into the house, Robin, and I will show thee Letitia Penn.”

“ Oh, do, Cousin Deb ; thee ’s been promising a long time to show her to me.”

In a few moments Deborah came into the room bearing upon a cushion a curious-looking object, roughly carved out of wood into the semblance of a doll. It was rudely painted, although little of the paint remained visible. Hair had once adorned its head, but now was all worn off, save for a fringe just above the forehead. It was dressed in a faded court dress of delicate brocaded silver. The skirt, even though the glory of the coloring had long since departed, still stood out in stiff, stately folds. The waist was long and sharply-pointed,

and displayed an expanse of wooden shoulders and bosom. The linen garments were brown with age and tattered in many places. The long, stiff, wooden legs did not terminate in feet, but were left mere footless stumps.

Robin gazed at the doll with speechless interest ; she touched it softly, finally ventured to take it up from the cushion and turn it over and over, and asked in an awe-struck voice :

“ How old is it, Cousin Deb. ? ”

“ Let me see ; it must be quite one hundred and sixty years old, or perhaps more. Does thee know who William Penn was, Robin ? ”

“ Oh, yes ; he was a Friend, and father says he made a great many treaties, and some of them were sharp bargains.”

“ Stuff, child ; don't thee believe it. Thy father's no business to talk so of Penn. Well, after William Penn had founded Pennsylvania and gone home to England, his little daughter sent this doll dressed, just as thee sees her now, in the court dress of that time, over to this country as a present to a little Quaker friend who lived in Pennsylvania. There were no dolls made in this country then, and the doll was considered very magnificent, and was named Letitia. It has been preserved and handed down through all these years, and has finally come to me. I will leave it either to thee or Dick, because thee and he are the last of the Elgars.”

"Leave it to me, do, Cousin Deb ; I have n't any dolls at all, and Dick don't care for dolls, he 's too big."

"Well, we 'll see, we 'll see ; but Letitia must be put away again, she 's very frail and precious."

And the historic doll was carefully covered over, and borne away on her pillow. The rest of the day was spent, when dinner was over, in wandering with Dick all over the trim, well-kept place, and after tea they went out to the pike to wait for the lumbering, red stage to pass and throw out the mail and evening papers. For the neighborhood of Fenny Drayton was still primitive enough, although within thirty miles of two great cities, to have its only egress by means of a daily stage, which passed Ivanwold gate, traversed the whole neighborhood, went through Airlie village, and on "up-country," as the Marylanders put it.

The next morning, soon after breakfast, a transformation took place in Dick. The immaculate morning suit disappeared to give place to a costume befitting a young rancher. Coat and vest were thrown off, a light flannel shirt open at the throat, trousers tucked into high boots, and a small felt hat shading the eyes, made a most perfect type of superb young manhood. Over one arm hung a thick coil of rope some forty feet long. The slight flush on his face, the animation and alertness of the whole figure betokened that he had a task before him that was very much to his taste.

"What is all that rope for, Dick ?"

"Come and you shall see, little one."

"Oh, Dick, thee 's going to break the colt to-day?"

"Yes ; get your hat."

Robin waited for no second invitation, but snatched her hat from a peg, rushed down the steps after Dick, and danced along the gravel walk at his side in a perfect fever of excitement.

"Dick, will thee let me come into the field with thee ? for I want to see every bit of it."

"I dare not let you come into the field, but you can sit on top of the fence and see it perfectly. The colt has never been handled at all and is as wild as a deer."

"How can thee get near enough to handle him if he 's so wild, and won't thee be afraid ?"

"Oh, no, I shall not have much trouble."

Dick spoke confidently ; he knew his work well, and he did not know what fear was where horses were concerned. Having spent his early boyhood and all of his summers in the country, he had had the handling and breaking of all the horses on the place. When they reached the field where the bay colt pastured together with five or six other horses, one of the stablemen stood beside the bars with surcingle, crupper and strap. The bars were let down and Dick gave several prolonged cries, to which the horses responded by coming quickly to the bars. The men stood aside and they passed through, the young colt tossing his head and throwing his heels into the air as he came last. The horses were

all driven into the barnyard, where it was Dick's purpose to decoy the young colt into a sort of pen that was in one corner of the enclosure. Once captured, he would take him back to the field, where the real contest between man and brute would take place.

The other horses were soon driven into the stable. Then began a hot chase up and down and round and round the narrow limits. Many times the two men almost had him, only to have him kick his heels in their very faces as he would wheel and gallop the other way. But in one unwary moment, when closely pressed, he dodged into the pen, and before he could escape the stableman had cut off retreat, while Dick sprang forward and with one end of the long rope had thrown over his head a noose, and then sprang back, just in time, as the colt, rearing, struck at him with his hoofs, tearing open the light flannel shirt and carrying away the lightly constructed side of the pen at the same time. Then the wild creature made a bound; the barnyard gate was thrown wide open, and the bay colt tore madly through into the pasture-field, dragging Dick with him.

Robin felt her breath come short and fast, as she gazed upon the wild, headlong pace of the horse and the hatless form of her cousin dragging, as she thought, helpless at the end of the long rope. The creature made for the far end of the field, where the corner of the fence stopped him for a moment. Dick was instantly on his feet, shortening the rope; and as the colt saw one foe

close at hand and the other advancing surely upon him, he felt himself overtaken once again and plunged wildly first to one side then to the other, Dick heading him off each time. Finally the creature, laying back his ears, wheeled around and again let his heels fly, but Dick was too quick ; he jumped forward, and before the animal could change his position he had seized the noose that encircled the colt's neck, and with a dexterous turning of the rope had passed it through the mouth, round the lower jaw and into a slip-knot, making the famous "Comanche bridle."

This was another moment of danger to the young man, and Robin expected to see her cousin trampled to death. The creature, unable to free himself from the powerful grasp, plunged and reared. Dick suddenly let him go, and the colt made a dash ; the full length of the rope was given him, then he was brought up short by the terrible and unexpected jerk upon his mouth. Many times over did he try to get away, always to be reminded that there was a power stronger than himself. Then he commenced to kick, and Dick knew that he must resort to the severest measures in subduing the wild creature. With much trouble surcingle, crupper and strap were put upon the restless animal, but not without every variation of brute resistance. With the aid of the stableman the left foreleg was bent and strapped in that position to the surcingle, and an extra rope, passed round the neck and through the mouth, was drawn and

tightened in such a way as to twist the head to one side, where it was securely held. Both men jumped aside. An attempt to plunge, a jerk of the long rope from the master hand, and the bay colt rolled over upon the grass and lay quivering in every muscle.

At this a childish shout went up from Robin, who had breathlessly followed every movement of horse and master. And when Dick finally seated himself coolly upon the resistless animal's head, she waved her hat and shouted across the field :

"Hurrah for thee, Cousin Dick !"

In a few moments the bent head was released, the leg was unloosened, and the colt sprang to its feet trembling and dazed. Taking advantage of this subdued moment, Dick then partly led and partly drove the animal into the adjoining field, which was newly ploughed, calling to Robin that he was going to mount. Robin scrambled down and ran across to the place indicated, where she climbed to the top rail and perched as before. The bars had been let down between the fields, and after many obstinate pauses Dick and the colt were finally deep in the furrows of the newly-ploughed ground, which Dick knew would offer greater resistance to running and be much less dangerous for the falls that might be in store for himself.

He began by throwing his weight across the animal's back, without mounting ; suddenly he vaulted upon his back; then began such a plunging and rearing, alternated

with quick, bucking jumps, that Robin's heart was in her mouth at Dick's risk. But he kept his seat with undaunted nerve. The hot sun poured down upon his bare head, and a deep red flush had spread over his face and neck. The end of the long rope was loosely wound round one wrist, his knees were pressed close into the sides of the horse, and his crouching body testified to the struggle that was going on between man and beast.

Brute force had a momentary triumph ; one desperate plunge, followed by short jumps, and Dick was hurled high into the air and landed some feet away upon his face. The colt, with the long end of rope dragging, made for the open bars ; but before he could gain the pasture-field again Dick was up, though the arm that had had the rope twisted about it hung limp. Only an instant did he pause ; then gathering himself quickly he shouted to the man to head off the colt. But it was too late : the colt was already galloping madly round the pasture-field. Then the two men began a chase which Robin thought would never end, but again the colt was driven into the corner, and this time Dick called out in hot excitement :

“ I 'll take the life out of you, my fine fellow.”

The leg was again strapped, the head again bent, and the bay colt was thrown in quick succession several times. Dick's strained and swollen arm was much in his way, but he did not pause for that, until the colt, worn out and dazed, stood trembling and submissive.

Dick then sprang upon his back, this time without resistance, and riding up to the fence where Robin was still perched, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, said :

“ Well, little one, what shall its name be ? ”

“ ‘ Comanche Dick, ’ ” promptly replied the child.

“ Very well, ‘ Comanche Dick ’ it shall be.”

“ But, Dick, thee hurt thy arm when thee was thrown ? ”

“ Oh, it is nothing, only a strain ” ; and Dick jumped to the ground, took off the rope-bridle, replacing it with a halter, and turned the newly-named and conquered animal over to his man. And hand-in-hand Robin and Dick went slowly through the bars, across the field homewards.

CHAPTER VI.

BENDING THE TWIG.

THE breaking of Comanche Dick was a great event in Robin's young life. She made her cousin explain each twist of the rope, each step of the process, and was never weary of asking questions and listening to Dick expound his views on horse-breaking. She dreamed at night that she was breaking a colt, and was being dragged over the grass by a long rope ; then she saw Dick, with his hair shining in the sun, crouching on the bare back of the plunging, rearing creature, and she waked up with a start, relieved to think that Dick was not lying dead in the ploughed field, and that she had only been dreaming.

Each day of the happy week passed rapidly, bringing with it some exciting and interesting scene in the many lessons that the bay colt had to be taught ; for it was no speedy process to subdue and teach the wild creature to obey, and Dick's strained arm was much in his way, it being almost useless from the severe wrench the rope had given him when Comanche had in a wild moment of fury asserted his brute strength. Robin enjoyed the

lessons each day to their fullest, and there was stowed away in her brain a lasting memory of breaking the bay colt; and more than ever in her heart was a firm resolve to grow up a man and break a horse as Cousin Dick had done.

First-Day came round again, but only Dorothea appeared in the carriage to take Robin back to Airlie. Whether Gilbert was unwilling to encounter Deborah's sharp tongue did not transpire, and Deborah did not ask; but certain it was he did not appear, and mother and daughter returned alone.

The summer glided by uneventfully and peacefully, with many goings back and forth between Airlie and Ivanwold. Early in September Dick bade them good-bye and returned to Cambridge for his senior year, and full of plans for the time when his "grind" should be over. The time drew near for the little school-house in Fenny Drayton to open, and no mention had yet been made of Robin's return.

All the summer long the child had never once gone to the attic, and never had shown in any way that she regretted the dolls which had been so dear to her. Adsum had been her inseparable attendant, and the two had been at Gilbert's heels wherever he went; or if Gilbert were not at hand they would roam the farm over, following Kane through the various phases of the harvest.

It was during these summer months that Robin was allowed to ride upon a "grown-up horse," as she ex-

pressed it. She had announced her intention, upon coming back from her visit at Ivanwold, of never again riding her pony, or riding in front of her father on his saddle ; so Gilbert and Dick took turns in teaching her to manage a horse that was gentle enough to allay even Dorothea's fears and scruples. Gilbert suggested that, as she was now beginning to ride in earnest, she had better lay aside the voluminous old brown skirt she had hitherto worn over her ordinary frock, and have a neat habit. It was a proud day when the child was first equipped in diminutive habit and cap, her bright hair flowing over her shoulders ; but her delight knew no bounds when Dick produced a crop with a dog's head for a handle, and taught her how to open gates with it. Dorothea sighed to herself as she thought how determined the two men seemed to spoil her, but she was comforted when she remembered of what sound stuff the child seemed to be made, and how unconscious she was of the fact that she was being made much of.

When Dick had gone, and only a few days remained before the opening of the village school, Dorothea said :

"Robin, had not thee better get thy books together before school begins ?"

"Does thee mean the hateful books in the baize satchel, mother ?"

"I mean thy school books, daughter ; thee shall not call them hateful ; thee is getting to be very unruly in thy language."

"Mother, is there no other way of learning, except to go to the school-house where the teacher calls me 'Robina'? Oh, mother dear, cannot thee teach me? I've seen thee read out of big books, and thee knows such a lot about every thing. Or perhaps father might teach me, though I never saw him read any thing but the newspapers and the almanac."

"Robin, thee tries me very sorely. Does thee think it right to be so persistent with thy whims and notions?"

"Don't scold, mother dear, and please don't send me back to the village school. Just see how I have grown; thee has let three tucks out of this frock, and I am too big to read about the fat pig and the red cow in the old spelling-book, and the little black history with the picture of Molly Stark being a widow in it. Please, mother, let me have some sure-enough books. Thee knows I want to hurry to catch up with Dick so father won't feel badly any more when he sees I am really his son."

Dorothea drew the child to her and stroked her hair, while all unseen a silent tear stole down her face, as she recognized the same fixed notion in the child's mind, which the happy summer had not driven forth.

"Well, my child, I will talk it over with father; but I cannot make any promises."

Dorothea did talk it over with Gilbert, and Gilbert was perplexed and worried. He had never had much opinion of the little school in Fenny Drayton, but at the

same time it was the best there was, and the child could not grow up untaught. At last he asked doubtingly :

"How would Evan Massie do?"

"How does thee mean?"

"I mean, does thee believe that Evan could be persuaded to undertake Robin's education? There is nothing in books or out of them he does not know. Thee sees, Dorothea, it is this way : in a few years Robin would outgrow this village school, and she would have to go elsewhere. I shall never be willing for her to go away from home to school. Will thee?"

"No, Gilbert, never."

"Suppose, then, I go down and see Evan and talk it over with him? I will go this very day."

"The only objection I could possibly have to Evan is, that, with all his wonderful learning, he is narrow and is cut-and-dried in orthodoxy."

"Pshaw, Dorothy; what is it to thee whether he is Orthodox or Hicksite?"

"Well, thee go and talk to him; he is a born teacher." So it was decided.

Evan Massie, in outward appearance, must have been the type Dick had in mind when he told his aunt that "Quakerism was a devilish hard grind on the men," for he possessed a strange make-up. He was tall and lank, with straggling hair slightly touched with gray; he had pale, faded-looking eyes, a prominent forehead and a strangely sallow complexion, with a half-sanctimonious,

half-complacent expression on his face. His gait was uncertain, almost shuffling, and his attire was most sombre and funereal. But when any theme was started in the line of thought or study his whole face and figure underwent a transformation most startling. Then it was that one discovered the face to be massive and the eyes to be lighted by inward fire ; the gaunt and awkward frame was forgotten, and only the master mind shone out. He had spent his life in study, and possessed the wonderful gift of imparting his knowledge with all the clearness and enthusiasm of a master. He had been historian and lecturer in a Friends' college in Pennsylvania, but owing to uncertain health he had returned to Maryland and spent the last few years quietly among his books.

To him Gilbert went with his idea of Robin's education and laid before him the child's peculiar rebellion against the village school.

"Thee sees, Evan," Gilbert said, "Robin is a queer child, much too old for her years in many ways, and she refuses to study out of the books they use in the school-house. She has taken a fancy that she must have an education such as a boy would have. Will thee undertake her ?"

"Gilbert, thee asks a hard thing of me ; I never taught any girls and never any one as young as she is. If she were older it might be easy enough."

Gilbert then talked long and earnestly. He told Evan

of Robin's contempt for the spelling-book and indignation at the chanting of the lessons in unison at school. This amused Evan vastly, and he held forth on the general system of public-school teaching among the Friends and finally said :

" I believe I will agree to teach Robin. Will thee and Dorothea promise not to interfere ? I have a method of my own of teaching which I would like to try. If she were only a boy now I would like no better chance for experiment."

" But, Evan, thee must not overwork her, she is very young."

" Never fear ; mine is not a forcing system," replied he.

" Very well then ; will thee come up to Airlie and see Dorothea ? and we will arrange place and time. Any thing thee chooses to ask in payment will be cheerfully given."

" Very good. Must thee go ? Farewell then."

" Farewell," responded Gilbert ; and he returned and reported the interview to Dorothea.

Long and frequent were the discussions between the parents. Dorothea felt that it might perhaps be the very worst thing to take the child away from companions of her own age, and that it was allowing her to have her own way far too much ; that Robin was too young to know what she wanted, and more than all that she feared Evan might make a monstrosity of her if he had the sole management and direction of her education. Dorothea had

the old-time aversion to a woman who was learned, but she knew that the times had changed and that it was a common thing for a girl to have a college education; "the more 's the pity," she said to herself. As for Gilbert, he was vastly pleased at the idea of Evan for preceptor. He would have humored his little daughter in almost any whim or desire, and the notion secretly tickled him that Robin was fancying herself a boy; and he smiled broadly as he remembered coming upon her in the early June days, bird-nesting. True to her notion of having given over girls' pursuits, he had seen her climb up, take down the nest, and empty out the eggs in true boy-fashion; but what amused him most, and what was the pith of it all, he had seen her after several hours gather up the eggs, lay them carefully in the nest and then put it back again where she had found it. And Gilbert chuckled over it not a little.

When Robin was told that she might have her wish, that she should study at home and was to have Evan for teacher, she looked almost frightened. She had always been afraid of Evan, and she thought for a few moments that she would almost rather go to the obnoxious village school. But soon the importance of having a man to teach her, and of having big books to study like Cousin Dick's, caused all doubt to vanish and made her impatient for the important time to arrive. Sore was her disappointment when upon the day Evan finally came he came empty-handed, and she wondered if he might not

have several big volumes out in the bottom of his rockaway. He talked pleasantly with Dorothea and then turned to Robin and asked her about the hounds, and said he would like to see them. Robin instantly offered to show them to him ; and off they started, accompanied by Adsum and Whack. The old story of the sheep that butted Whack over was graphically repeated to Evan. After the dogs had been seen the stables were visited. Robin showed her horse, which she triumphantly said was her " very own " ; then she launched into a spirited description of the breaking of Comanche Dick. Evan listened attentively to every word the child uttered, he drew her out more and more and upon many different things, noting the changing, varying expressions of her face and the quick intelligence she evinced ; and he said to himself, " She will do."

In an hour's time Robin felt as much at home with Evan as she did with Dick. When they returned to the house she had slipped her hand into his and was chattering away to him as if she had seen him every day of her life. From that time on Robin and Evan Massie were sworn friends and allies. All during the bright autumn days the lessons were given in the open air and without books, save that now and then Evan would bring some translation of his own, made simple and quaint for childish ears, of some old Greek tragedy or some mythological lore. It was not until cold weather set in and they adjourned to the house that tasks were set and learned. Every book, every lesson was adapted to the capacity of

the child so exactly that Robin learned with avidity, and the hours spent with Evan were the happiest of the day. Gilbert and Dorothea, as they looked on and saw how happy the child was and how easily and eagerly she learned, felt that they had done wisely and well. The child was led on step by step ; Latin, made simple and easy, was introduced before the winter was over, and it was with delight that Evan watched her mind grow and expand. He meant that she should have as solid and as classical an education as he was capable of imparting ; that it should be as thorough and deep as any young man could attain in any college ; and he carried out his purpose. When spring came again the lessons were given out-of-doors, sometimes on the porch, sometimes in the garden, sometimes while walking through the fields.

Summer came, bringing vacation and Dick triumphant from graduation and full of the idea of going abroad in the autumn for several years. He said no more about selling his old home, and the holiday months were spent in riding and hunting. So proficient had Robin become in horsemanship that Dick said she should have Comanche when he went away, and Gilbert promised to take the young horse in hand and train him for her. This was a great delight to the child, but it was tempered by the thought that Dick was going away to stay ; and as the time approached the child could not look at him without a quiver coming to her mouth and tears welling up to her eyes.

"When thee comes back, Dick, I 'll be most as big a man as thee is," she said tremulously, looking up earnestly into his face.

The day of parting came. Dick rode up early one morning and had only a few moments for last words. The young man found it harder to leave his Airrie kinsfolk than he had imagined it would be. After all, they were much nearer to him than his mother's relatives had ever been. Somehow in this parting hour the memory of his father came strong upon him, and he almost wished he had waited awhile before going abroad. As he kissed his Aunt Dorothy's grave face there was a boyish lump in his throat ; but it was Robin with her little arms tightly clasped about his neck, her dry eyes and twitching lips, that unmanned him. She spoke no word, nor did he, but he kissed her, unwound her arms and dashed down the steps with a hasty clasp of Gilbert's hand, and was off. Robin stood watching him for a moment, her eyes flooded with sudden tears, then rushing to her mother she buried her face in the skirt of her gown and sobbed convulsively :

"Mother, we shall never again see our Dick."

Dorothea stroked the bright hair and tried to comfort the heart-broken child ; but she echoed in her heart the same refrain. He would come back, but he would not be their Dick, their boy. The world would spoil him, and the tie that bound him to them would be broken.

And the days stretched into months, and the months grew to be years, with little break in the daily life at Airrie.

CHAPTER VII.

"Since I saw you last
There is a change upon you."

—*Ant. and Cleo.*

IT was a crisp and frosty night in late October. A cold, brilliant moon floated high in the heavens, outlining in its clear rays the bare trees, and touching gently here and there the ghostly white branches of an occasional sycamore, as it swayed in the keen night air. Now and then a gust of wind swept by, carrying before it an eddying whirl of fallen leaves, and a sweet, pungent smell of autumn woods was everywhere. A straggling party of riders emerged from the gloom of the woods into the bright patch of moonlight which fell across the roadway ; some six or seven of them, with several dogs following at their heels in tired, dispirited fashion.

They rode sometimes three and four abreast, then fell back into pairs when the road narrowed again. They clattered along in the bright moonlight, which showed that among them were at least two women, and that the brush of a fox was fastened to the saddle of one of the two. They rode rather silently, for it had been a long

chase, and many miles had been covered between the afternoon which saw them start and the late moon which shone upon their return. At a fork in the road they came to a halt, and a separation in their ranks was about to take place, when a voice said decidedly :

"Come, don't pause here ; you are all to stop at The Hatch for a sandwich and something to warm you up a bit. Come, Harmony, my daughter, you and Miss Robin ride on with me. Come ahead, Elgar, and which of you is Jared Comly ? I 'll be hanged if I can tell in this half-light ; oh, there you are," as a well-mounted man separated himself from the rest.

"Really, Captain Esten, father and I must go home. Mother is always worried when we are out hunting and get back late," and Robin's clear voice rang out in the night air. She leaned from her saddle and laid her hand entreatingly on her father's arm.

"I think, daughter, we might just as well stop. It is very little out of our way, and I know thee must be cold."

Robin straightened herself in her saddle and replied :

"Very well, father, if thee thinks best."

The whole party now closed up and proceeded to follow Captain Esten and his daughter as they rode in the lead with Gilbert. Jared fell back beside Robin, and as they rode along he said :

"It was a spirited chase we had this afternoon. I had no idea, Robin, thee rode so splendidly, and thy horse is a fine jumper. Where did thee get him ?"

"Yes, he jumps well for an old horse," and Robin leaned forward, caressed the horse's neck, and continued: "He belonged to my cousin Dick Elgar, who broke him just before he went to Europe, almost nine years ago"; and, addressing her horse, she went on: "Thee is not so young as thee was then, Comanche, but thee can teach many a younger horse to jump."

"I never knew thy cousin; he was always so much away from the neighborhood when I was a boy at home. Has he never been back in all these years?" asked Jared.

"No, never; and there is no prospect of his return for years to come, apparently. We rarely ever hear from him nowadays; but, Jared, what has brought thee back to this quiet neighborhood? I can scarcely understand how a man who has had a chance out in the world can voluntarily return to the country to live."

"Well, the truth is, I have been rather a rolling stone ever since I ran away from this neighborhood to go out West. But I am beginning to think the far West is no place for a born-and-bred Quaker, though the free, rough life has a certain fascination. Still, I believe there is just as much chance for a man here in old Maryland as anywhere. It depends of course on the man; if he has pluck and courage to work, he can do it without going to the ends of the earth. I don't know just what I am going to do here, I may not even stay long; but I'd like to get hold of one of these old farms and see what I could make of it."

"There 's many a one that needs something to be made of it," the girl said, almost as if speaking to herself.

The rest of the party had clattered along the pike and were almost out of sight. Jared and Robin rode briskly forward, only to arrive at The Hatch when the others had all dismounted and entered its hospitable doors. Harmony Esten alone remained to welcome Robin and Jared.

The Hatch had been a homestead belonging to an old Quaker family, and Captain Esten during a short visit to the neighborhood of Friends years before had been so charmed with this particular place, and with country life generally as it was presented to him in this cultivated community, that on being retired from the Navy because of ill-health, he immediately came to it, and, fortune favoring him, was able to purchase the coveted farm, which he called The Hatch, as he facetiously explained when asked why he had so christened it, "Other men talk about the delight of being under their own roof—why should not an old sea-dog like myself be under his own hatch?" So it became known, and the jolly, ruddy-faced man with his jokes and wit and gentle, delicate-faced daughter Harmony, took up their home among the Friends and soon became prime favorites throughout the neighborhood.

The three young people entered the wide hall, and passed into the brightly-lighted dining-room. The men

were all gathered in a group about an old-fashioned buffet, upon which were set out several decanters and glasses and one suggestive bottle. As the two young women entered, the men with one accord lifted their glasses as if in toast. The host raised his hand to an imaginary cap, and gave a military salute, saying as he held up his glass :

"Here's to the gallant rider who was in at the death, and may she always win the brush."

The light fell upon the girls, one of whom straightened herself to her full height and gravely returned the host's salute by touching her stiff hat with the handle of her crop. As she stood straight and tall in the severe folds of her habit, with one spurred boot showing at the hem of her skirt, it was manifest that Gilbert Elgar's prediction had been verified, and that little Robin had grown into one of the bonniest girls in all Maryland. She seemed to rivet the gaze of the group at the buffet; there was a momentary hush as each man held his glass suspended and gazed at the figure fully revealed in the light; then the host spoke and broke the spell :

"Come, Miss Robin, have a sandwich. Come, Harmony, you and Miss Robin must be almost done up."

"Well, father, I will confess I am rather done up, as you express it. I'm not used to cross-country riding and being so many hours in the saddle as Robin is."

"Truth is," broke in Gilbert in a loud tone, which rang with pride, "my girl was brought up on a horse. I'll match her for riding against any man in the country."

"Oh, father, hush"; and a hot flush swept over Robin's face at her father's boastful words; and as Gilbert drained off another and yet another glass, Robin stepped forward saying:

"I must bid you good-night, Captain; it is very late, and we must go at once." Then turning to her father she continued: "Thee must hurry, father."

Robin made the quick change from "you" to the Captain to "thee" to her father, for the Friends, all save a few of the old-time ones, use the plain language only among themselves, and often depart from it even then.

"Very well, child," Gilbert replied. "You see, Captain, how I am bossed; but I believe I rather like it, now that I am getting to be an old man. But, Robin, thee must not abuse thy privilege," turning to his daughter, who had put her arm through his, and was leading him towards the door, where she paused to say:

"Good-night all. Harmony," turning to her, "I want you to have the brush; will you let me give it to you?"

"No indeed, Robin; I will not take the brush till I win it," replied Harmony with pride.

"That is right, Miss Harmony," said Gilbert; and with last farewells Gilbert and his daughter set out for home. When half-way down the lawn they were joined by Jared, who said in explanation of his sudden appearance:

"I am riding this way too."

"Do not let us take thee out of thy way, lad," said Gilbert.

"No, but if thee does not mind I will ride as far as Airlie gate." And Jared leaned forward and tried by the light of the moon to see if there were any invitation or consent given in Robin's face.

The soft moonlight fell full upon it and showed that Robin's face had no special interest in Jared's movements. She seemed rather to be lost in thoughts of her own that appeared to have little to do with her companions who were walking their horses at her side. And Gilbert and Jared were left to discuss the events of the chase, during which Gilbert's voice rose once or twice to a high, excited pitch, recalling Robin from her far-away thoughts, and making her urge her horse to a brisk trot, which soon brought them to Airlie. Here Jared took his leave, and father and daughter rode up the familiar lane.

Instead of dismounting on the lawn, as she usually did, Robin rode with her father to the stables, where she quickly slipped to the ground, unbuckled the girths, dropped the saddle on the grass, and catching the bridle over her arm, entered the barn-yard and stable-door, and quickly turned Comanche into his stall before her father had accomplished the same task with his own horse. Strangely enough, Gilbert seemed to be fumbling still with the buckles of his saddle when his daughter said :

"Let me help thee."

Just as she spoke a light appeared at the end of the long porch, although the moon was shining brightly, and a woman's voice called :

"Is it thee, Robin?"

"Yes, mother," answered the girl cheerily.

"Is father with thee?" anxiously inquired Dorothea.

"Yes, we are both safe, only a trifle late."

By this time Gilbert's horse had been unsaddled and turned into his stall by the side of Comanche, when Robin proceeded to give them each a measure of oats; then shutting the stable-door, she drew her father's arm through her own, and they proceeded very slowly to the house. Gilbert seemed to encounter a great many difficulties on his way thither. Dorothea met them at the steps. As they ascended she raised her lamp high above her head and peered anxiously into her husband's face, and then questioningly at her daughter, and said, in an undertone :

"Is every thing right?"

"I think so, mother," doubtingly replied the daughter.

"What 's that thee says, Dorothy?" asked Gilbert; then he paused on the step and launched into a long and vague account of the chase they had had, in which he mixed up in a jumble his daughter, the hounds and Jared, till Dorothea said, with a sad, discouraged glance at Robin:

"There, Gilbert, leave the description till morning; it is very late."

She preceded them into the house, still holding the lamp aloft to light the stairs. Gilbert gropingly made his way across the passage and up the stairs, Robin guiding him carefully to his door, from which she quickly went to her own room. Tossing hat and whip on the bed, she sat down at the window in the moonlight, knowing that her mother would soon come in for a last word. Dorothea's soft, light step was soon heard. She came into the room, shut the door, and set the lamp down on the dressing-table.

"Tell me about it, daughter."

"About the hunt, mother?"

"No, Robin, about father."

"Well, mother, we stopped at The Hatch. I did not think it best, and said what I could in remonstrance. I tried to persuade father to come straight home, but he was quite determined to stop. I could not insist without creating suspicion, and Captain Esten, who is hospitality itself, offered various things in his unsuspecting, urgent way, and——"

The sentence was not finished. Mother and daughter looked silently into each other's eyes; then Robin went to her mother's side, and drawing her mother's head to her shoulder, said tenderly:

"We must bear it together, mother dear; thee must be brave, and not grieve so much. We will hide this thing as long as we can; we must let no one outside know what a growing fear is in our hearts."

"Robin, I shall have a long talk with father in the morning. I shall tell him that this thing is growing upon him, that thee knows of it, and that he must overcome it for our sakes."

"Mother, thee must be very gentle with father ; he must not think we are stern and unforgiving. Oh, mother, he has been such a loving, indulgent father to me, I cannot bear to have this terrible thing overtake him."

The tears fell thick and fast as Robin laid her head upon the dressing-table. It was now Dorothea's turn to soothe and comfort. Finally Robin lifted her head and asked :

"How long is it, mother, since thee noticed this thing in father?"

"The first time I ever had a suspicion was five years ago, just about the time the oxen ran away with the cart and broke Kane's back. Just after that I remember father was a good deal depressed and low-spirited. That summer the crops were bad ; the season had been a wet one, and——" Dorothea paused.

"Mother, then this is why we have been steadily running behind ; father has been trying to forget himself and us," she added sorrowfully. "I understand now what father meant years ago when he lamented down in the wheat-field that he had no son, that I was only a helpless girl, and would grow up to a useless womanhood. He dimly foresaw this day." And Robin walked rest-

lessly up and down the room, followed by her mother's loving yet anxious eyes. At last she asked :

"What is thee thinking, Robin?"

"I am thinking, mother, that perhaps there are some troubled days ahead for thee and me ; that we are two women and must do battle with the future, perhaps with disgrace. But, mother, we are not helpless women who will sit down and moan ; we will face it."

"Thee is right, daughter ; I do not feel helpless and never will with my tall, self-reliant daughter to lean on."

"Really, mother, does thee mean that I am thy dependence?" and an eager look sprang to the girl's eyes.

"Yes, daughter, thee is my dependence, my strong right arm, and I shall need to lean on thee for the rest of my life."

"I never heard such sweet words of praise from thy lips ; I will never fail thee and father."

As she spoke, Dorothea gazed at her and could think of nothing so like her child as one of the brave young knights of the Round Table going forth in full armor to do battle for the weak. At last, remembering that it was late and that her daughter had had a long, hard ride, she bade her good-night. Robin stooped and kissed her mother on both cheeks, and they separated for the night.

Long after her mother had gone she sat on the edge of her bed, with no thought of time, turning over and over in her mind the change that was taking place in her

father. The tears would spring to her eyes only to be brushed impatiently away, as no way out of the trouble came to her mind. She rose at last with a sigh and laid aside her habit, then went to the dressing-table, when her glance fell immediately upon a well-worn, black book lying face downward. Her face lighted up, as she picked up the book, leaned her elbow upon her hands, and commenced where she had left off before she went on the hunt, the puzzling out of a queer Greek phrase she had met with in Prometheus, which she was reading with Evan. For a time she forgot the troubled conversation with her mother and the gloomy forebodings which had been in her mind, and it was far into the night when she put out her light.

The education begun years before was still going on, although the hours were much fewer than of yore. True to his resolve, Evan Massie had imparted to his girl pupil the same knowledge that he would have given to a young man. Robin's childish wish to study big books like Cousin Dick's had been fully gratified, and it is doubtful whether Dick during his whole college life had acquired as much as this eager young woman had in the hands of her faithful domine. He had taken her over the same ground that he had taken many a young man. She stood to-day as well qualified and equipped to enter life as Dick himself had been. Dorothea, with her old-fashioned bringing up, had rebelled once or twice at the continuance of the lessons and had been

unable to see of what use Greek, Latin, and the higher mathematics could be to a girl, and a country girl at that. So she intimated to Evan, when Robin had reached her eighteenth year, that the usual time had arrived when a girl's education ended. She was scandalized to have him reply that he "should expect to conduct her studies and reading till she was at least twenty-one." And as this had met Gilbert's full approval, Dorothea resigned herself to the three or four mornings each week and made up for it in taking her daughter in hand the rest of the time and teaching her to be an efficient housewife. Robin did not like the household duties, but true to her love and reverence for her mother she never let Dorothea know how much she preferred to be roaming through the woods with the dogs, riding with her father, or reading with Evan in the garden.

It had always troubled Dorothea that Robin seemed to care so little for any companionship outside of her home circle, and the young people of the neighborhood, although having known Robin all her life, felt that she rather held aloof from them. It was the other way; the young men especially averring that they were "afraid of her learning," as they expressed it, though whenever Robin, totally unconscious of the manner in which they regarded her, appeared among them, they rallied about her as around their natural leader. Whenever Dorothea would urge her to mix more with the

young people of the neighborhood she always replied that she was satisfied with her home, her books, and the dogs ; but if the remonstrance was unusually persistent, she would ride down to Ivanwold and spend a day or two with Cousin Deb, for whom she still had unbounded affection.

When the Estens came to live at The Hatch, a new world was opened for Robin. Harmony's knowledge of the outside world, her foreign travel, were a delightful surprise to her, and Harmony herself, with her gracious manner, her thousand and one airy little graces and her delicate blonde beauty, was in such contrast to her own graver type that Robin was at once fascinated. A warm friendship grew up between them, and a well-worn path, often travelled by Harmony and the Captain on the one hand and by Robin and her father on the other, was made through the woods over the stile and across the meadows between The Hatch and Airlie. But the last few months had brought a slight change ; the grass was springing up in the path ; for The Hatch, with its genial master and his ever hospitable decanter and glasses, was proving a growing snare to the master of Airlie.

CHAPTER VIII.

FALLEN UPON EVIL DAYS.

THE rising sun fell aslant upon the old farm, and in its pale, frosty rays, Kane, with the help of a stout stick, was seen dragging his crippled legs slowly down the slope of the meadow, driving the cows to the milking-shed close to the dairy. As he reached the stream which flowed through the meadow, and the cows waded in to drink, he paused and looked at the ploughed field behind the dairy which stretched far and away to the woods. As he anxiously scanned it he muttered :

“Ain’ nary blade to be seen yet, an’ here ’t is nigh onto November, an’ its the onliest wheat we all’s sowed. I done tol’ Mister Gilbert it mought ha’ been up by now if he ’d done put it in the groun’ when he ough’ to. An’ the corn ain’ goin’ to be no great shakes,” glancing to a distant field beyond the stables and corn-house, which had innumerable shocks standing in silent rows awaiting husking. Then he went on muttering :

“An’ I was such a blame’ fool t’ let them dummed oxen run away with the cart, and p’alyze me, an’ leave

Mister Gilbert with no one fit t' look after them darkies. An' who 's goin' to ten' to huskin'? The las' crap o' wheat so fell off, too, 'twon' bring more 'n nothin,' 'Deed an' 'deed, Mister Gilbert don' do like he ough' to, an' the good Lord knows what 's comin' to we all."

Kane drew a prodigious sigh, and commenced again his slow and weary progress. Just when the sun was high enough to cast pale, uncertain shadows across the bare lawn, a large flock of turkeys, full-grown, came strutting around the corner of the house. They had had their morning feed and were ready for a day of wandering all over the farm, in and out among the shocks of corn, picking up stray kernels of the grain, then on in solemn procession across the newly-sown wheat-field, and then away to the distant woods, occasioning Dorothea untold worry and anxiety when their absence was prolonged. Gilbert had many a sly joke at his wife's concern for them, and if by chance any of them disappeared bodily he would say gravely :

"Too bad, wife, to lose thy new winter bonnet," or, "Kane tells me, Dorothea, that thy new table-cloth flew away this morning"; for Gilbert maintained that each turkey meant some long-coveted article, and that Dorothea labelled each with the thing she meant to buy with its price.

The sun mounted higher and higher, showing by its broad light little apparent change in the old farm. The nine years which had passed had to the careless or unac-

customed eye left little impress upon it, but the change was there, silent and sure. The hedges, which years before had been things of beauty in their compact trimness, had thrown out long, straggling branches that trailed bare and ragged in the keen air of the October morning, showing from their length and thickness that they had not been clipped in many months. The declining year had found the lawn full of thick, long grass, which now was brown and tangled. The old locust-trees showed painful gaps in their stately ranks, made by the ravaging gales that swept from the northwest. These and many other signs of decay and neglect might easily pass unnoticed as belonging only to the dying year, but to the practised eye they had a painful significance not to be mistaken.

Adsum and Whack were both on the porch, and both showed the advance of years. Though Adsum's faithful ears were as keen for the call to duty as ever, Whack's tail still did the wagging ; but the old dog did not carry his head as proudly as of yore. It was curiously twisted to one side, which Gilbert said was from rheumatism and old age, but which Dorothea declared was only retribution overtaking him ; because he had barked one morning to allure Adsum from his breakfast, and when the ever-faithful creature had gone to look for the cows which Whack's bark indicated, it was to find he had been sold and lost his breakfast to boot ; for Whack complacently ate it up, and in turning sharply slipped off the

high porch in his unwary and wicked haste, and forever carried his head on one side in punishment. As for the fox-hounds, they had all been turned over long ago to Captain Esten, who had established quite a kennel; and as Gilbert had grown weary of keeping up the dogs and training the young ones, it was with relief and satisfaction that he met Captain Esten's proposition to take the old and experienced pack, add them to his own, and keep them for the benefit of the fox-hunters in the neighborhood. So the old shepherd dogs were the only ones left at Airlie.

Gilbert still kept a couple of hunters for himself, the carriage-horses for Dorothea and Comanche for Robin, together with the necessary farm horses and young colts that were always growing up and which ran wild in the fields. He had been promising himself to purchase, if he ever could afford it, a young horse for his daughter, as Comanche was getting pretty old for cross-country riding, but Robin had begged her father not to do so, telling him that one of the young colts in the field would do to break in the spring. She did not, however, say that she intended to break and teach him with her own hand, for she knew her father would never think it proper for her to do so; but with that end in view, she went every day to the field where he pastured, and with a few lumps of sugar soon accustomed him to her approach and finally to come at her call. Whenever he would catch sight of her he would come trotting, stand

shyly a few paces off, and then gradually take the sugar from her hand and even endure a caress or two. At last he would follow her all over the field, and the girl knew that no Comanche bridle would ever have to be used upon him.

Breakfast the morning after the hunt had passed rather heavily. Dorothea and Robin were silent. Gilbert was very talkative and full of enthusiasm over the success of the chase and his daughter's fine riding. He did not seem conscious that any thing was amiss. When Dorothea finally rose and said, "I'd like to have a word with thee, Gilbert," Gilbert looked surprised, but said with a twinkle in his eyes, as he glanced at his daughter :

"What's up now, Dorothy? It is a long time since thee has invited either Robin or me to a private interview; and we always know that they mean scoldings, don't we, Robin?"

Robin looked pitifully at her father, thinking how little conscious he seemed of what to them meant ruin and disgrace.

Gilbert followed Dorothea into the sitting-room. Robin hurried with her book out to the garden, to the seat under the pear tree where the old swing used to be years ago; her fresh, young face clouded over and pain in her eyes, as she pictured her father's surprise and mortification at what her mother was about to say, and the distress and sorrow her mother would feel in touching openly upon what she had long since hidden from herself even.

"Gilbert," began Dorothea, "the time has come for me to speak."

"To speak—what about?" and Gilbert looked his wife full in the face. But not long did he sustain the unflinching gaze; the ruddy color died and he said gravely:

"Thee knows, then?"

"Yes, I struggled against doubt, till doubt became certainty, and now I find our Robin knows it and I can keep silent no longer. Oh! Gilbert, if thee could have seen her last night lay her head down and sob, and beg me to be gentle with thee, to remember that she and I were not hard and unforgiving, I am sure thy heart would have been wrung as mine was and is. Does thee think I have not seen for several years the growing evil? Does thee think I do not know how heavily in debt we are? Does thee not know that this gnawing anxiety is what is robbing me of health and strength, and does thee not know where this will bring thee?"

"But, Dorothea, I have never been really under the influence of — of —" and Gilbert hesitated to put it into words.

"Gilbert, never till last night did I see thee absolutely not thyself; but Robin led thee up from the stable and guided thee to thy room. It was a scene that is stamped upon my heart and brain, and I thanked Heaven for the first time in all my life that our boy had not lived."

Dorothea's composure gave way. She sank down upon

the sofa and buried her face in the old and worn pillow, that Robin had cried upon over the spelling-book so long ago. Gilbert stood immovable in the middle of the floor. His mind went back to the sweet day that they had stood hand in hand and said the Friends' ceremony, and he repeated the simple words : " In the presence of the Lord and before this assembly, I take Dorothea to be my wife, promising with Divine assistance to be unto her a loving and faithful husband till death shall separate us." He remembered how she had turned to him and repeated the same formula, and he looked at the prostrate figure before him and noted with a pang how the last few years had changed her. He remembered that up to the time Kane was hurt there had not been a line in her sweet face. Had he brought all the lines he now saw? had he disgraced himself in her eyes and in the eyes of his daughter? he asked himself. He covered his face with his hands to blot out the picture, and groaned aloud :

" Dorothea, wife, look up " ; and stooping over her he said : " It has been cruel to thee, but I never meant to be so ; I have tried to drown my troubles and shut out the thought of the ruin that is staring us in the face. But I will subdue and control this thing that has overtaken me ; I believe, Dorothea, that it has not yet mastered me."

" Gilbert, I know it has not ; thee can exorcise it entirely, I feel sure, if thee will try." *

"I will try"; and as he spoke he bowed his head and a solemn silence fell between them. In a few moments he said hesitatingly :

"Dorothea, we are in a grave situation financially, and I have not known what it is to be free from anxiety for several years."

"I know it, Gilbert, and we must find a way out of it."

"Oh, wife, it was a terrible day for us when William Dale became treasurer of our bank and I went on his bond. As thee knows, when he died suddenly and his accounts were looked into and the funds were missing, I had to mortgage our home to meet the obligation. Oh ! the ruin it has been to us. But, Dorothea, that is not all ; I have not been able to meet the notes on the mortgage as they have fallen due."

"How can that be ? they must have been paid or the mortgage would have been foreclosed."

"I have had to borrow the money to pay each of the two last, and the next has to be met First Month, and, wife, I do not know where the money is to come from ; the farm is scarcely even paying expenses."

"How much is the entire debt, mortgage and borrowed money ? "

"The mortgage is now twelve thousand. I have reduced it some, as thee knows, but lately I have borrowed about two years' interest money, say about fifteen hundred dollars."

"Well, Gilbert, we must sell,"

"Sell ? sell what ?"

"We must sell part of the farm."

"Never," said Gilbert, emphatically. Dorothea went on :

"How is wheat selling this fall ?"

"It is very low, and our crop is short."

"How many acres are in wheat at present ?"

"Only forty."

"Oh, Gilbert, we have nearly five hundred acres, and only forty sown in wheat ?" There was a long pause. Dorothea broke it :

"Well, my husband, we will try to pull through. I will put my shoulder to the wheel. We must, to start with, reduce every expense ; we must sell every thing that will find a market : the two carriage-horses, your two hunters, and a couple of those young draught horses ; they will surely meet the interest money this coming year, without our having to borrow. We will reduce the farm-hands to half the number after husking. I will get rid of the women-servants, save Joppa. We will sell Comanche too."

"No, Dorothea, Comanche Dick shall not go ; he's Robin's idol. But I tell thee what we might sell ; we might sell Whack instead." And at this speech the old twinkle came to Gilbert's eyes, for he was one of those people who as soon as a burden is shifted to the shoulders of some one else immediately rebound and become delightfully cheerful.

"This can scarcely be a time to jest, Gilbert."

"No, wife, it is no joke. I will see about selling the horses. I can find purchasers, I think; if not here, certainly in town, and they will pay this year's interest, as thee says."

"And, Gilbert, this coming spring must see a change in the working of the farm; thee has let it go down for the last six or seven years, and I saw this past summer acre after acre covered over with sedge and choked with daisies, instead of being in wheat, corn or potatoes. Kane, as thee knows, can no longer get about, and somebody must come to the front, and it must be thee. Oh! how I wish Richard were at home again."

"I am afraid that Dick has totally forgotten this part of the world. Did I not tell thee years ago he was a selfish dog? I heard somewhere the other day that an agent had been at Ivanwold trying to arrange for its sale."

"From whom did thee hear it?"

"From Thaddy Watkins, but he is such an everlasting liar that I only half believed him."

"Gilbert, thee must not use such dreadful language; it is not becoming in thee, a Friend, to speak so; but I feel sure if there were any arrangement a-foot for selling Ivanwold, Deborah would have told us. I wish the boy were home. He is the only male relative we have in all the world."

"Thee might just as well have none, so far as he is concerned."

"Gilbert, will thee see Robin, and tell her of our talk? she will expect it."

"Dorothea, I cannot ; do thee go to her ; I cannot face her ; it is bad enough to face thee. Does thee remember our wedding day ?"

"Yes, I remember it " ; and Dorothea laid her hand on Gilbert's arm with gentle pressure.

"And Gilbert, I may rest secure in thy effort to keep thy promise ?"

"Yes," and he added after a moment, "until death shall separate us." The words of the marriage seemed to be ever recurring to his mind.

A loud knock on the outer door here interrupted them. Dorothea opened the sitting-room door and saw Evan Massie's long, ungainly figure standing on the porch.

"Oh, it is thee, Evan. Thee 'll find Robin waiting for thee in the garden " ; and as Evan passed through the house in search of his pupil Dorothea said : "There is an expense that can be done away with. Robin is twenty, and her lessons will have to stop."

"Why, bless my soul, Dorothea, I have n't paid Evan any thing in a year. He told me long ago that he would not take another cent, that henceforth the lessons were to be merely for pleasure."

"Thee should not have consented to such an arrangement ; I cannot bear obligations."

"I could scarcely decline ; he is never so happy as when he is teaching Robin." And this closed the interview between them.

The days that followed were busy days on the farm.

After corn-husking and butchering, the farm hands were reduced to three. Joppa alone remained in the kitchen. Every thing salable was sent to market—corn, wheat and potatoes. Dorothea counted her unusual number of fine hams hanging in paper bags in the smoke-house, and she thought with pride that with the sale of them and her turkeys she would have a tidy sum. Gilbert fidgeted about and declared “there would n’t be a thing left on the place fit to eat if every thing was to be packed off to market,” Dorothea remarking in reply, with a stern look about her lips, “that it would have to be so—there was no choice.”

Towards the end of December Gilbert was ready to go to town with the horses. Comanche stood saddled and bridled. Two men had charge of the horses that were to be offered for sale in town.

“When will thee be back, Gilbert?” asked Dorothea anxiously.

“As soon as I can ; it may take some time to dispose of them. The men will be back to-morrow.”

Dorothea detained Gilbert yet a moment, and looking entreatingly into his face said :

“Gilbert.”

“I will remember, wife,” he said in answer to her mute appeal.

Then he mounted, waved them a farewell ; and Comanche went down the lane picking his way daintily over the frozen ground.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVE OF CHRISTMAS.

A WEEK had passed since Gilbert went to town. Dorothea and Robin were both anxious about him. The men had returned immediately, as Gilbert had promised they should. In a few days he wrote that he had sold four of the horses and had a chance for the remaining two, and that he would be back at the end of the week. This was a great relief to mother and daughter.

Christmas was at hand and the two women were busy with preparations. Great was the baking and stewing that went on at Airlie; for all of the negroes on the place and their families would present themselves Christmas morning for a "giff" and some Christmas cheer; and during the day all the men in the neighborhood would be sure to ride over with Christmas greetings, as the custom was in the neighborhood, and there must be something to offer each visitor as he came in from the cold.

Robin had been out in the keen winter air gathering holly. She came in with her arms full of branches covered with bright red berries, and dropped them on the

rug before the open fire. She put her hands up to her ears, which she briskly rubbed, for it was in vain that her mother had tried to persuade her to wear a hood, such as all the other girls did in the country in winter.

"No, mother," she always replied, "it is too childish ; I want to be hardy and ruddy ; I don't mean to coddle myself."

As she stood before the fire with the holly at her feet, she was the very picture of health and strength. There was a certain fearlessness in her glance and in her movements that made her unlike any one Dorothea could think of, unless it was Dick as he had been when he went away years before. Yes, somehow Robin did suggest Dick to her ; not in face or feature, for Dick had blue eyes and was decidedly blonde, while Robin's eyes were gray, so deep at times as to be almost black. Her brown hair had the red glint that it had had when a child and, as her mother had prophesied to her years before, was not short and curly, "like Cousin Dick's," but rippled away from her forehead and was fastened in graceful, careless fashion at the back of her shapely head. Her skin was clear and without blemish, although the tan and burn of summer still lingered.

As she stood there, Dorothea wondered if this were really beauty that she looked upon, or was she a fond, doting mother seeing only with the eyes of love ? But when the girl stooped and picked up a cluster of the berries and laid it lovingly against her cheek, Dorothea said

to herself with a thrill of pleasure, "It is real living, breathing beauty, and as true within as without."

"Mother, I must put some of these branches of holly in father's room; he loves it, and he may be here any moment." As she spoke she arranged and tied it deftly in bunches.

"But, daughter, it is too early to put it up; the berries will drop off before Christmas-day."

"Well, perhaps I had better wait a little." She paused a moment in her work, and glanced out of the windows, exclaiming: "Here comes a messenger from the Estens." She was out on the porch, and in a moment had in her hands a note, from which she read eagerly:

"Harmony says her father has asked the young men's club to meet there Sixth-Day evening; that will be Christmas-eve; and she wants me to come over and help her during the afternoon with the tables, and stay during the evening and wait upon the club. She will send for me and send me back again, as she knows father is not at home. She has asked Cousin Deb and one or two others. What does thee think?"

"I think thee must go, of course."

"But, mother, I cannot leave thee alone. If father is not here by that time I will not go."

"Thee need not stop at home on that account. I shall have Joppa with me, and I will keep Kane at the house till thee gets back again."

"But if father were to come while I am gone?" and she looked at her mother earnestly.

"If father comes, he will come all right, never thee fear." So it was settled.

The neighborhood of Fenny Drayton abounded in societies and clubs, which met at stated intervals at the different places in regular turn. There were the Farmers' Club, the Ladies' Association, jocosely called the "Club's Wife," and one or two others, to some or all of which a goodly portion of the Friends belonged. It was a great feature of the Farmers' Club to be invited each Christmas-tide to The Hatch to hold its meeting. Captain Esten was not a regular member, but he always liked to entertain the club in winter and the "Club's Wife" in summer.

Whenever a club meeting was held it always took the women of the household two days to prepare for it. Hams were boiled, chickens or turkeys roasted, spiced-beef prepared, steaming pans of hot rolls baked, bowls of "flannel" cakes stirred up, and big loaves of "Sally Lunn," golden-brown from the oven, made ready in such profusion as would have served to provision a small army. It had been a custom since the early establishment of the Club to invite three or four of the young women of the neighborhood to help wait upon the tables; for so fast would the dishes disappear that no household had enough domestics to supply the demand for the various good things. The young farmers would

begin to assemble about half-past three in the afternoon, and as soon as enough were present to make a goodly representation they would all start, with their host in advance, and walk over the entire place, inspecting every thing, asking questions, comparing notes and offering comments. After inspection they would adjourn to the house, and a business meeting, with closed doors, would be held, and long discussions as to the best methods of farming, raising cattle or carrying on a dairy would occupy an hour and a half or more. Then the bountiful supper would be served, after which, with lighted pipes, the club would depart.

Sixth-Day came round, and still Gilbert had not returned. Robin had been restless. Some nameless dread seemed to hang over her all day. She was on the point of sending an excuse to The Hatch, but Dorothea would not permit it. In the afternoon a light, fine snow began to fall, the first of the winter, and when the Estens' carriage came Dorothea remarked :

"Thee 'll come home in a sleigh, I doubt not, for we are going to have our Christmas snow."

"Mother, it is not too late ; do let me stay with thee ?"

"Nonsense ; give my love to Harmony and Deborah. Tell Deborah I have some splendid sausage-meat I will send down to her in a day or two." And they parted.

The Hatch was soon reached, and Robin was met at the steps by Harmony.

"I was so afraid you might not come ; and before we go into the house I want to say that the Standishes have come out from town to spend Christmas with us, and I've asked Jared Comly and Mr. Watkins to stay after the club is over and spend the evening, and your cousin Deborah too ; so you must stay."

"I cannot stay late, Harmony, for mother is all alone. Father has not come yet, though we expect him to-night. But what will Sara Standish think of our country men?"

"Think ? why I don't much care what she thinks. She has entered into it, and is going to help us with the tables."

"And her brother?"

"Well, I don't understand Henry Standish ; I am curious to know how he will strike you."

"You know, Harmony, my impression counts for little ; I've seen so few men outside of our own neighborhood. I can scarcely dare to measure a man of the world by our simple Quaker standard. Now if you ask me what I think of Thaddy Watkins, I can tell you in two words ;" and for some unexplained reason the two girls went off into merry laughter, and were only startled into sobriety by a voice calling out :

"Miss Robin, you dropped your dloves. I foun' 'em lyin' in a little bun'le at the horse-block."

With this remark, a tall, dark-haired, slender, effeminate young man sprang up the steps, doffed his hat and offered the "dloves," as he called them, to Robin, who with a grave face said :

"Thank you so much, Mr. Watkins. You will excuse Harmony and me if we do not stop? We have an afternoon's work before us." And she turned to enter the house.

"Won' you shake han's with me, Miss Harmony?" said Watkins, holding out his slender, nerveless hand.

"Why, I shook 'han's' with you this morning, Mr. Watkins, when you first came," said Harmony, with laughter still in her eyes and on her lips. With careless nods the two girls disappeared into the house, Harmony remarking to Robin, when out of hearing: "Thad Watkins has been here since ten o'clock this morning; think of it!"

The young man meanwhile stood on the steps, staring at the door through which they had gone, and muttered to himself helplessly: "I 'm dam' 'f I know whether she was laughin' or no."

Thaddy Watkins belonged to a well-known family in Maryland, not exactly "'ristocratic," as the Maryland darkies would put it, but whole-hearted kind of people whom everybody visited. They had been slave-owners, were rich and still kept up their place in an adjoining county in the style of the old plantation days. Like many other families in the same State and standing, they had a peculiarity of speech which marked them as distinctly Marylanders of perhaps not the most cultivated type. Thaddy, as he was called familiarly, spent most of his time in the neighborhood of Fenny Drayton. He was

sure to be found in every gathering, and would often come early in the day and stay for hours at a stretch, or even over-night without much persuasion. He was tolerated by the men for his good nature, but was laughed at unmercifully by the young women of the neighborhood, which, however, he did not seem to mind in the least.

Robin and Harmony commenced the setting of the long tables in the dining-room, preparatory to the big supper. They were aided by Deborah and Sara Standish. Harmony was arranging bowls of flowers for the tables, when Deborah spoke up in her high-pitched, quick way :

"What 's the use of the flowers, Harmony? You 'd better a long way put a dish of buttered flannel cakes or a pyramid of Sally Lunn in the middle of each table; men go in for good solid dishes, and don't care a button for flowers unless they could eat 'em."

"But, Miss Deb, it can't do any harm; they are so pretty, and, besides, I robbed the greenhouse of every blossom, and they can't be wasted. What do you think, Robin?"

"No use to ask her," said Deborah; "she 'll say put 'em on. I only wonder she did n't dig up an old Greek root and bring it along as a decoration."

"Do you mean that Miss Elgar really knows any thing about Greek?" asked Miss Standish, looking curiously at Robin.

"Bless me, yes," continued Deborah; "she reads Greek and goodness knows what besides. You'd better not tackle her; she's had more book-learning than any man I ever met." And lowering her voice to a whisper, so that Robin might not hear, she added: "Besides that, she is not only a case of 'handsome is' but 'handsome does' too."

"Hear! hear!" struck in a voice, and Henry Standish, Sara's brother, attracted by the voices in the dining-room, strolled into the room with his hands in his pockets. His eyes scanned the group of women, falling instantly upon Robin, at whom he gazed fixedly, taking his hands slowly out of his pockets meanwhile. There was a pause; then Sara said:

"Henry, let me present you to Miss Elgar."

"Was it you, Miss Elgar, who was being so eulogized as I came in? I heard something about Greek and something about Sally Lunn, and something about beauty; will you not repeat it for my benefit?" and he looked at Robin half quizzically, half lazily.

"Well, the Greek, Mr. Standish, might prove too dead a language to some of us. The Sally Lunn I will help you to later, and the beauty," Robin looked up at him with a half-challenge, "you can take your pick of; there are four of us, you see," and she nodded towards Sara, Harmony, and Deborah. They all laughed, then Harmony said:

"Why are n't you in helping to settle the question of

the proper way to house stock in winter? we are too busy out here to be amusing."

"That is a gentle hint, and I will take myself off, lest it grow broader. I consider it a compact then, Miss Elgar, that you wait upon me at supper and see that I have 'Sally Lunn,' whatever 'Sally Lunn' may be." Robin nodded acquiescence and Henry Standish strolled out of the room with a last admiring look toward her.

The afternoon wore away and night fell; lamps were set upon the long, heavily-laden tables, the last hot dishes were brought in, the old-fashioned doors were opened and folded back against the wall, and Captain Esten, exclaimed in a loud, hearty voice:

"That's a sight to gladden one; come, fellows, fall to," and the club soon filled all the seats, and the business of supper began.

Three among the young men were more interested in the movements of the waitresses than in the viands served. Jared Comly followed Robin's movements, while Henry Standish and Thaddy watched Harmony as she flitted about. Thaddy exclaimed at last, as she passed him by without stopping:

"Ain' you goin' to give a fella some flannen cakes, Miss Harmony?"

"Do, some one, give that boy some 'flannen' cakes, as he calls 'em," commanded Deborah, who was pouring coffee at a side table.

"I 'm dlad you 're keepin' your eye on me, Miss

Deb'ra', for I 'd be starvin' by this time," plaintively said Thaddy. Gazing reproachfully at Harmony, he said in a low tone : " You don' do like Miss Rob does ; she 's helped Stan'ish to Sally Lunn twice already."

Meanwhile the rest of the men were discussing politics, and as both sides were well represented the talk grew warm and loud ; especially when it turned upon " local option " and its effect in the county upon the election. In all of which Jared bore a foremost part, but no matter how much absorbed he seemed in the discussion, if by chance Robin stopped near him his eyes rested upon her till she moved away. If she handed him any thing he let his remark go unfinished to say a low, grave word of thanks.

At last supper was over ; the folding doors were closed and the tired young waitresses had a quiet tea-table of their own, presided over by Deborah. After which, the club having departed, all save the two young men who had been asked to stay, the party adjourned to the long drawing-room, full of its queer trophies from foreign lands, its bric-a-brac, its rugs, and its rich, Oriental hangings. A huge fire leaped and danced in the wide fireplace, and as the party drew about it Harmony pulled down the shades and drew the heavy curtains over the windows, remarking :

" It is snowing hard, and you must stay overnight, Robin."

" I cannot, Harmony ; I cannot leave mother. Father had not come when I left, you know."

"How did thee come over, Robin?" asked Jared in a low tone.

"I came in the Estens' carriage; they sent for me, and will take me back."

"Thee had better let me take thee home; it is a bad night, and I don't like the idea of that ride for thee with only a servant."

"I am not afraid, Jared; but if thee wishes I will go with thee, and it will save them from sending me home," she frankly replied. Satisfied with the promise, he moved away.

Jared Comly was a man to be remarked anywhere among men. He was above medium height, compactly built and muscular. His features were perfectly regular and clearly cut; he had straight, dark hair, straight brows, and deep-set, restless eyes the color of which it was hard to define: they were eyes, now dark, now light, that could be stern and fierce one moment, then become soft and gentle the next. His chin and mouth were firm, though the latter rarely relaxed into a smile, and the lips curled away at the corners into an expression that at times was far from pleasant. His face, with its singularly clear, pale, skin, was uncovered by beard or moustache, and was indicative of strength and intelligence, although there was something of hardness and obstinacy in it, and something of repression too. Jared ought to have been a handsome man, but he was not. He was a man whom all men in the community of Friends respected, although they often were a little

shy of him. Some one said he had a bad temper, and was uncertain in mood. He was a strong contrast to the other men present: Thaddy, with his unformed, effeminate make-up; Henry Standish, with his indolent manner, half-flippant, half-cynical.

Robin noted them each as she sat in the deep arm-chair with the firelight playing over her face, and she thought that Jared was after all about the only real man in the neighborhood; and yet——

“Miss Rob, what you thinkin’ of?”

“I am thinking, Master Thaddy, that I cannot allow any one to call me ‘Miss Rob.’”

“Aw, comé now, but you let Comly leave off the han’le entirely, then you come down on a fella when he does like I did.” And Thaddy drew up his chair and was just preparing to seat himself at Robin’s side, when Henry Standish said:

“Watkins, Miss Harmony wants you.”

“Well I ’m dlad some on’ wants me,” and Thaddy went to the other end of the room where Harmony was making tea at a dainty little tea table.

“Mr. Watkins, will you help hand the cups?”

“Miss Harm’ny, don’ you sen’ me off. I ’ve done more erran’s to-night, and been worse treated than anybody yere. Make that lazy Stan’ish fella han’ the cups. Yere Stan’ish, you come and han’ these cups.”

Standish did not move nor even hear, but went on talking in an undertone to Robin.

At last Robin rose and said she must go ; but Captain Esten insisted that she must first have a glass of egg-nogg to celebrate Christmas-tide. The big bowl was brought in on a tray, and several toasts were drunk standing ; after which good-nights were said, and Jared and Robin were on their way to Airlie.

The snow was several inches deep on the ground, but it had quite ceased falling. Only an occasional flake fell upon their faces as they made their way rather slowly over the white, unbroken road. Long silences fell between them. Robin was anxious about her father, and was fearing that she would find he had not returned. To-morrow would be Christmas-day, the holly was all up and every thing ready to welcome him. She grew impatient and said : " Do hurry, Jared, I am so anxious to know about father." They were soon at Airlie, and as they were about to turn in the lane, Robin exclaimed :

" There are broken tracks all up the lane, Jared ; father must have come ; I am so relieved." And scarcely had they stopped when she had sprung lightly to the ground, running her eye over the house, which was silent and dark ; then, turning her gaze intently toward the stable, she suddenly grasped Jared's arm and said :

" What is that moving down near the stable door, Jared ? "

" I do not see any thing."

" There is certainly something standing there ; I can see it distinctly against the snow."

"I see something, too; I will go and find out."

Robin followed a few steps behind him. Jared called back:

"It is only one of thy horses that has been shut out from the stable." With a bound Robin was ahead of Jared and came close to the dark form.

"It is Comanche Dick, with the saddle still on and father's bridle dragging in the snow"; and the girl shut her hands together convulsively to keep down the quiver that shook her from head to foot, as an awful fear took possession of her.

"What can it mean?" asked Jared in a dull tone.

"It means that father has either been thrown, or ——" She paused, unable to finish the sentence.

"Wait, Jared"; and before he could understand her intention, she turned and ran swiftly to the house. Entering the door on tip-toe she found a dim light burning in the hall, and stealing to the sitting-room, she found her mother sleeping quietly on the old sofa, with a rug thrown over her feet, and a placid look on her face. She was evidently waiting for Robin and Gilbert to come. The girl stole out with trembling limbs and beating heart. She found Jared at the steps.

"Something terrible has happened. Father is not here. Mother is sound asleep. Thee 'll help me to find father, Jared?"

"Yes."

"Thee go get on Comanche; I will drive thy horse.

We will stop at Airlie, wake up the toll-gate keeper, he has a trap, we 'll make him follow in it.

“ Why not let me go with thee ? ”

“ Does n't thee see ? Comanche will know——will know ——” and the terrible anguish at what her mind pictured overcame Robin for a moment. With no further word Jared brought up Comanche, who seemed dejected and tired.

“ Had not thee better wake thy mother first and tell her thy fear ? ”

“ No, let mother sleep as long as she can.”

And the pair, so curiously divided, went swiftly down the lane again, the soft snow drowning the noise of the wheels, up through the village where Jared soon had the toll-keeper up, who exclaimed, “ Lord bless my soul,” when they explained their mission. In a few moments he had run out from under a shed a long, covered wagon, and to save time changed Jared's horse from the vehicle Robin was driving to the wagon, and Robin and the toll-keeper got in together. But several people in the village had been awakened by the muffled voices and the running of the wagon out from the shed ; who, thinking that perhaps horse-thieves were abroad, called out to them to stop, and not till the well-known toll-keeper's voice rang out with “ Damn it all, go to bed, it 's Jim Barnes,” were windows slammed and they allowed to proceed on their way ; but not far. A short half-mile down the pike, right across the road, lay stretched a dark object, with

only a few snow-flakes resting upon it. The party halted, and the three were instantly on the ground. Robin knelt down quickly and fumbled with trembling cold fingers to open vest and shirt to feel for the heart. There was a moment's pause, then looking up into the faces of the two men, she said, in a despairing tone :

"I think he is dead. Lift him gently."

The two men lifted Gilbert Elgar into the wagon, Robin standing silently and quietly in the snow till it was accomplished. The trembling and quiver were all gone ; the excitement and the anguish of fear all swallowed up in the awful reality. Slowly they made their way back again. Silently the wagon drove up the lane, crossing the lawn to the very steps of the porch. The wheel grated against the lower step, and as it did so Dorothea opened the door, with the lamp turned up bright, and said :

"Is it thee, Robin?"

"Yes, mother, and father is with me." Robin came quietly forward, took the lamp from her mother's hand and set it in the window. In doing so she made a motion to the two men, saying in an undertone :

"Up-stairs, Jared." Then leading her mother into the sitting-room she shut the door. How she broke the news, and what passed, neither ever told. In a few moments all was in confusion. Jared thought that Gilbert was not dead, and rode off for the doctor, whom he brought back in an hour. The doctor pronounced

Gilbert to be living, and said it was "a stroke"; he might die any moment, or he might live some time.

And with death staring them in the face, Christmas morning, with its green garlands and holly berries, dawned bright and clear upon Airlie.

CHAPTER X.

"I WALK ALONE."

—*Via Solitaria.*

THE news of the calamity at Airlie spread rapidly through the neighborhood. It was carried from house to house with ever-varying details. Every one was shocked, and a cloud was cast over the bright Christmas-day. Gilbert Elgar was the last man in all Fenny Drayton whom any one would imagine having "a stroke." He had never had a sick day in his life, and was the picture of health, so the people told each other; only a few nodded their heads and looked wise. Every one wondered how things would be left with the Elgars, for Gilbert was known to have been in a "bad way" financially, and many were the low-whispered prophecies that Airlie would be brought under the hammer. For what could two women do with a run-down farm, with a twelve-thousand-dollar mortgage on it, and no one to turn to for help?

All day long at Airlie a stream of sleighs and carriages came and went, bearing kind inquiries and offers of help. Deborah came over from the Estens, where she had stayed

the night before, and took the direction of household matters. Evan Massie and Jared arranged to stay alternate nights and watch in the sick-room, to be relieved the second week, if Gilbert should linger, by a relay chosen from among the men in the neighborhood ; for it was the invariable custom among the Friends, in cases of illness, to take turns in remaining with the family, either to help nurse or to be of use in any way in lifting the burden as much as possible from the shoulders of the near and dear ones. Dorothea and Robin sat quietly at the bedside, hoping for some change, some sign of life beyond the feeble pulse and faint respiration. Again and again during that long day did the mother's eyes seek the daughter's imploringly, asking ever mutely the one question that was torturing her heart and soul : "Had Gilbert kept his promise to her, or was this the result of his old enemy?" And ever doubtingly the daughter's eyes returned the mute question.

Only once during the day did Robin leave the silent room. Then she stole down, out of the house, through the snow to the stable to see what condition Comanche Dick was in. On the way there Adsum was close at her side trying to thrust his nose into her hand, seeming to know that she was in trouble. When she reached the stable the sight of the horse, standing dumb and unknowing in his stall, was more than the girl could bear. She leaned against the side of the stall and hid her face in her hands, but only for a moment or two. Suddenly

dashing away the tears, she told herself that this was no time to break down and cry ; she must be brave and composed for her mother's sake ; this was only the beginning, perhaps, of long weeks ahead, of suffering days and worse nights, and she must not add to her mother's grief by giving way now. So she went back to the house.

The time dragged slowly. In a day or two there was a slight change, a faint rallying. Gilbert regained the partial use of one side, and it became a certainty that for a time his mind was unclouded ; but speech did not return, and the doctor said he might live in this condition for weeks, but there would be no further rallying ; medical aid had done all it could do, and it was merely a question of time. Dorothea had found in Gilbert's pocket a memorandum of the sale of the horses, and a roll of money amounting to what seemed a fair price. This she carefully locked away until the first day of the New Year dawned ; then she brought it out, and eagerly paid the half-year's interest on the mortgage, and was impatient, even irritable for the first time when she found that she could not pay the whole interest for the year in a lump, but must wait until the next installment fell due. So the rest was locked away until Seventh Month should come round.

Day after day passed ; there was no change, and the long vigil continued. Sometimes, from the imploring look in the sick man's eyes, as he followed their every

movement, they were sure that there was something weighing upon his mind that he wished to say, but there was no articulation ; and many were the devices they employed to help him reveal it, but all in vain ; the look would fade, to be followed by a heavy stupor. So First and Second Months passed, and towards the end of March it was evident that the end was near. Gilbert had been for several days entirely comatose. The doctor said he would probably never have any sign of returning consciousness ; nor did he. At the close of a sunshiny day, when the grass was beginning to spring up again in green spots, and the first robins had appeared in the lane, Gilbert died.

There was no moan nor giving way to grief in the household. Dorothea expressed a wish that there should be no meeting held at Airie, nor at the Meeting-House. The Friends might meet at the grave ; those who wished to make remarks might do so. She had borne herself with almost rigid composure, and when the end came there was no outward breaking down. Her face had grown strangely old and wan ; her step was languid and feeble ; those who saw her shook their heads and said they had never seen such a stricken-looking woman. And when the morning of the burial came it was found that Dorothea could not leave her bed. Then it was that Robin realized that there was no one left to her ; not one near relative in all the world to go with her to her father's grave ; no arm to lean upon. Of all the distant

cousins and connections in the neighborhood, there was not one face she felt that she could bear near her in this ordeal. Deborah told her she could not go alone ; it would not be "meet" for her to do so.

"Then thee go with me, Cousin Deborah?"

"No, child, I dare not leave thy mother. Why not have Captain Esten? he was thy father's good friend."

"No! no! not Captain Esten. Ask Evan Massie to go with me."

The Estens and a few of the near friends were gathered in the sitting-room, with Robin among them, wearing no outward badge of mourning. Harmony had brought some white buds from The Hatch early that morning, and Robin laid one of them in her father's cold fingers. A few hours later, when she took her last look at the loved face, the bud in his hand had opened into a full-blown rose, and it seemed to the girl that it was a promise, direct from Heaven, of her father's ever-continuing love and watchfulness over her, and the first thought of comfort stole into her heart. The little procession left Airlie. The old family carriage, with Robin and Evan, and driven once more by Kane, came first after the dead. Then came the Estens and some few of the distant cousins and connections. The sun shone out bright and warm as they slowly wound their way toward the Meeting-House. They passed the different familiar places along the road, and at every gate stood a carriage ready to follow Gilbert Elgar to his last resting-place under the shade of old Charlie Forest.

When they reached the Meeting-House there was a large gathering of Friends waiting in the woods to pay their last tribute of respect. Gilbert was carried to the chosen spot, his daughter walking firmly just behind, and the vast gathering closed in rapidly around them. There was a halt, and with bowed heads the silent communion of the Friends was held. The sun poured down upon them through the leafless trees, and upon Robin standing apart and alone, with clasped hands, gazing, tearless, into the open grave. A faint, murmuring sound came from the very heart of the crowd, which, at the sound, fell back a little and disclosed the speaker, a woman in plain bonnet and dress, who began in a sweet, low voice :

"Time, which leads on for us its successive changes, bringing as it does to us so much continual experience of Earth's mutability, what will it do for thee that lies dead before us? We stand at this grave and know with anguish that the form, once animated by his bright spirit, is already brought into close contact with the clay, and we mourn because the loved one is wrapped so closely in the bosom of its mother Earth. It is the inexorable decree, speaking to us in the most forcible of all language, saying that he whom we loved is not here. Earth holds his clay tenement, but there is now an utter chasm between it and him. The separation is complete and total ; the separation in our minds and hearts should be as absolute. But what does time bring to the soul, to the spirit that has left us? Ah ! friends, no light cometh to explore the way but faith, the holiest, highest faith ; look-

ing neither on the right hand, where the imagination of man dreams finite dreams of infinite felicity, nor on the left, where doubt opens its caverns of despair. She rises up and up, and leaves him in the bosom of his Father and his God." There was a pause; then in a tremulous voice the speaker added: "I would quote a line from an ancient Hebrew dirge:

'Mourn for the mourner, not for the dead;
He is at rest, but we in tears.'"

Robin had bowed her head at the opening words. She knew the voice; it was that of Friend Rush, who had spoken in Meeting, years ago, when she was a little girl and had misbehaved on First-Day. The whole scene rushed back upon her mind as distinctly as if it were only yesterday and she were a little girl again, being soothed in her father's strong arms after her mother's rebuke. And those strong arms were folded now across his breast, stiff and cold, and nevermore would enfold her as they had loved to do. And as a line from *Via Solitaria* came to her mind, she was roused from her thoughts by a slight stir in the crowd, and she knew that the last offices to the dead were about to be performed by kind and loving friends. Several young farmers stepped forth, and as soon as the remains were lowered, with long-handled shovels which made no sound as the heavy earth fell upon the bosom of the dead, they filled in the grave. In a few moments their places were taken

by others, each stepping out from the crowd and taking the long handle from the hand that relinquished it in utter quiet. Jared, Captain Esten, and even Thaddy Watkins, each bore his share in turn, and Kane, who stood close behind his young mistress, made a movement as if to take his share in closing up the grave of his loved "Mister Gilbert," but some one else stepped forward, and his timid, half-involuntary movement was not noticed. In a few moments all was done.

Not till the grave rose high above the turf did the caretaker step forward and take the shovel from the last kindly hand. Then the crowd turned, making a passageway for Robin, who walked quickly, with head bowed upon her breast, to the carriage, utterly forgetting the presence of Evan, who hurried after her. And soon the Meeting-House and the burial-ground, with its new grave, were left in silence.

A few days later, at the close of the usual Fourth-Day Meeting, the heavy wooden partition was closed between the two halves of the Meeting-House, and the Preparative Meeting, which at stated times followed, was about to be held. There were gathered on the women's side some twenty women or more, with only a faint sprinkling of the plain bonnet and dress. The sheet-iron stove was giving out a genial warmth, which was most pleasant, for the early April morning was chilly and raw. There was a gravity about the Meeting rather more noticeable than usual, and an expectancy

in the faces of some of the younger women. Deborah was present, sitting far back upon one of the benches in the corner. After a slight pause, some one rose and read out the first query :

“Are all meetings for Worship and Discipline duly attended? Do Friends avoid unbecoming behavior therein? and is the hour of meeting observed?” This query being received with no unfavorable answer, the same speaker proceeded to read the second and ninth queries, chosen from the table of twelve, and read in nearly every Preparative and Monthly Meeting. These in turn having been favorably answered, there was a slight pause. Then it was in order for any one who chose to bring up a new question or to make remarks. After a pause a tall woman, with rather a stern face and forbidding manner, rose and said decidedly :

“I have long felt it my duty to bring before this Meeting a matter that has been troubling me for some time, and upon speaking of it to one or two others of our members I find I am not alone. There is a growing lightness, confusion and want of solemnity in the way of conducting burials among the Friends of late that I bear a strong testimony against, and I would like that this Meeting duly consider it and endeavor to bring about a change more becoming our Christian profession.”

Deborah shifted her position uneasily on her bench in the corner ; then a gentle-faced elderly Friend in plain dress rose and asked :

" Will the Friend who has just spoken particularize a little more fully, in what way and at what time she has noticed this change in our burials ? "

" I mean," replied the first speaker, " that at Gilbert Elgar's funeral last week there was much confusion, much loud talking, and, more than all, neither at the house nor at the Meeting-House here, was any solemn observance held. Many of the Friends, myself among them, assembled here in the Meeting-House to await the funeral, and were surprised to find it proceed directly to the grave, during which removal there was much talking and confusion outside. And I do not think it meet that the bereaved daughter should have had no relative with her at the grave."

And as she closed her remarks and sat down, a slight movement took place among the rest. Deborah rose from the corner bench. With a slight flush on either cheek, a carefully-subdued manner and a well-modulated voice she began :

" I wish to explain one or two things to the Friend who has just laid her grievances before this Meeting. It was by my cousin Dorothea Elgar's distinctly-expressed wish that there was no meeting held either in this Meeting-House or at Airlie. She felt that should the Friends assemble at the house she could not deny them the privilege of looking upon her husband's face, and that face, dear friends, was absolutely unrecognizable " ; and here Deborah, all the old enmity swallowed up and for-

gotten, wiped away the tears at the memory of Gilbert's face as she had seen it last. "Furthermore," she continued, "the Friend has forgotten that there is no person bearing a near relationship to the bereaved daughter save her own mother, who was too ill to leave her bed; her second cousin, Richard Elgar, not available on that occasion because of absence in Europe; and myself, who, as many of you will remember, could not leave the stricken wife, ill in an absolutely deserted home. And finally, as to the rest, surely the Friend cannot mean to characterize the beautiful and appropriate remarks made at the grave by Friend Rush as 'loud talking,' for there was no other sound save her gentle voice."

Deborah sat down; there was another pause. Then the opposing Friend rose, a trifle less assured in manner, and said in an injured tone:

"Friend Deborah's remarks are very timely, though perhaps her last remark would have been in better taste if left unsaid. When I alluded to loud talking and confusion I meant among those who were hitching their horses; it disturbed and jarred upon the solemn occasion. If Dorothea Elgar expressly wished for no meeting to be held, I can only deplore the departure from our usual form, and I beg that a committee be appointed to look into the matter for future occasions."

"I believe," remarked the gentle-faced Friend who had risen once before, "that our Discipline only asks in cases of funerals that there shall be a suitable pause before and

after interment, and this was certainly observed in the case of Friend Elgar's funeral. The Book of Discipline does not specify that there shall be a meeting in the Meeting-House or anywhere else, unless so desired by the family."

There seemed to be no dissent from this statement, and after waiting a few moments for further remarks, which were not forthcoming, the discussion was considered closed. It was not thought necessary to appoint a committee to look into the matter, and with one impulse the Meeting dissolved, and with little delay the members dispersed to their respective homes. As Deborah clambered into the rockaway and jerked the lines across the back of the old white horse, she said aloud to herself:

"I 'm mighty glad I was on the spot to answer that fault-finding Friend. As if Robin would n't have had a near relative with her at the grave, if the poor, solitary child had one in all the world that was this side of Jericho. Get up there, John!" and she jerked John into a trot, and rattled away home.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW MASTER OF AIRLIE.

THE first few days following Gilbert's funeral were spent by Robin in wandering aimlessly and restlessly about the place. She saw her father's face wherever she went ; not as it had looked for the last three months, but as it used to look years ago when she was a child : bright, cheery and with the merry twinkle in the eyes. She never could think of the face of the sick man ; it was not her father's face, she said to herself.

Harmony had come to spend a few days with her, and Deborah had spent nearly all of her time at Airlie ; but the girl felt an impatience to be rid of everybody, to have her grief and her loneliness to herself. Only when she entered the room where her mother lay, utterly spent, did she rouse herself, smile brightly, and affect a cheerfulness she was far from feeling. There seemed to be nothing seriously the matter with Dorothea, only a great weakness and languor had taken possession of her which she was unable to shake off. But as the days went by she left her bed for a chair, and when it was warm enough

she would be wheeled on the porch and sit for hours in the sheltered corner, where Gilbert had sat for so many years. One morning, when it was too cool for Dorothea to be out-of-doors, Kane came dragging himself up to the house, looking for "Miss Dorothy." Robin was leaning on the porch railing, gazing dreamily and absently down the lane. The dogs were at her feet. She turned her eyes mechanically on Kane and asked :

"What is it, Kane? do you want any thing?"

"This 's what I wan' t' know, Miss Rob; who 's goin' to give the men they orders? Nary word 's been spoke to 'em 'bout corn-plantin', an' it 's nigh onto time the corn was down in the groun'."

The girl stared at Kane in a perplexed way, as if she scarce understood him, until he said, entreatingly :

"'Deed, Miss Rob, don' look that-a-way."

She stood immovable. An awakening look began to creep into her face. She had forgotten every thing : that life must go on, that they must live, that there was no one left but herself, that debt and almost homelessness stared them in the face. She had spent the days since her father's death in selfish grief; she had forgotten what lay before her. She remembered her father's words to her years ago when she was a little girl. He had named her Robin because she was his little son, and she remembered her childish promise to be both son and daughter; and she remembered how, during all the years of her education, she had never really lost sight of that

idea. She recalled the night in the autumn when her mother had said : " Thee is my dependence, my strong right arm " ; and her reply : " I will never fail thee and father." The time had come at last ; she must be up and doing. She awoke to life and action. She glanced all about her, over the fields, which lay peacefully before her, as if to take in the magnitude of the task. She turned at last to Kane, and said, with decision :

" Kane, I will tell the men about corn-planting ; you will take your orders from me in future. Tell Bill and Saunders I wish to see them immediately. You get on Comanche and come with me over the farm. I must lose no time in pushing the spring work, which ought to be well under way by this time."

Kane stood propped by his stout stick and looked at her in open-eyed wonder, as if he in turn had not understood. At last he gasped :

" What you mean to do, Miss Rob ? "

" I mean to go to work, Kane."

" You mean you 'll farm this yere place you'self ? "

" Why, of course ; who else is there to do it ? I have known in a dim way ever since I can remember that I 'd have it to do some day, but I 've been in a stupid dream, and I had forgotten the time had come."

" But, Miss Rob, you 's only a woman ; what can you do ? "

" I am going to work just as you and Bill and Saunders do, or as any farmer would have to do ; and I am going to

use youth, strength, and brains to do it with, for I have these, if I am a woman "; and a resolute, undaunted expression flashed in her eyes. She continued earnestly : " I ought to have taken hold of things earlier. Has any thing been done yet, Kane ? Have the oats been sown in the old cornfield ? "

" Yes, Miss, they 's down in the groun'. Bill 's jes' got 'em done, an' Saunders an' me 's puttin' early pota-toes in the patch now, and Cap'n Essen sont over his man an' team las' week an' they 's done some ploughin'."

The tears sprang to Robin's eyes at the kind, thoughtful help from Captain Esten ; then she asked :

" What about the vegetable garden ? "

" Well, that 's done started. You see, Miss, all the weeks Mr. Gilbert was so poorly-like I jes' wen' on an' done all o' myself, without worryin' any one askin'. I 's been so long on the place that I don' need much tellin' ; so Bill, and me, an' Saunders, we 's done all we knew how ; but now the spring work 's comin' on, I thought I mought as well come an' fin' out 'bout things."

The girl looked into Kane's honest, faithful face, and said feelingly :

" I don't know what we should do without you, Kane. Let me see, this is nearly the middle of April, and the corn must be in the ground by the tenth of May. You say the ploughing is done ? "

" No, Miss, its nowise all done. We 's ploughed right smart, but there 's consid'able to do yet."

"Well, I will come and see for myself. Go saddle Comanche and be ready to go with me over the farm."

"Deed, honey, I can walk 'long side o' you right well."

"No, Kane, we shall be gone some time, and you shall not drag yourself around with me. You ride, and we 'll look at every thing. But not a word to mother till I have a chance to make my plans and arrangements. Kane, you will have to keep to your work in the dairy and in the garden, and with Bill and Saunders we can manage till harvest ; then I shall go into the fields myself."

"Oh Lord, Miss Rob, no use in you tryin' that ; you can't reap nor sow."

"We will see, Kane." A faint smile spread over her face at Kane's distressed look ; but she knew she would have a staunch support in him ; when he was once reconciled to the new order of things, when he saw she was in earnest, he would uphold all her undertakings.

The next few days Robin was completely absorbed. She had a long talk with Deborah, who after listening to the unfolding of the plan said :

"Is there no other way out of the difficulty, child ? does thee realize the long years of drudgery it means to thee ?"

"Yes, Cousin Deborah, but it is the only way, unless we sell Airlie outright. Thee knows that should we follow the usual plan and get some one to farm for us on

shares, mother and I would have no say in the management of things, and it seems to me that it would be practically financial suicide."

"Child, where did thee get thy head?"

"What little I have comes from mother. She has managed every thing on this place for years; no one knows it so well as I."

Robin next talked with Evan Massie, who listened attentively; then he said heartily and encouragingly:

"I believe thee can do it; thee has the stuff in thee. Of course it will be a hard rub, but it is by no means an impracticable plan. If I only knew a turnip from a cabbage I 'd give over books and help thee."

After this Robin walked over every acre of the farm and inspected every foot of ground. Nothing escaped her keen, young eyes. She spent a couple of days in going over her father's papers and accounts, scanning eagerly every scrap of writing, and making many calculations. At the end of a few days she had mastered the situation and had looked it squarely in the face. The only remaining thing was to break it to her mother. Dorothea had for several days observed that Robin was unusually absorbed, and seeing her with pencil and paper one morning she asked languidly:

"Daughter, what is thee so interested in?"

"Mother, I've been going over our affairs, and if thee is able I think we 'd better talk things over."

"Yes, my child, I've been trying every day to gather

courage to face things, and in my mind I come back to the one terrible solution, that our home will have to pass into other hands. We must sell Airlie."

"Never, mother, never !"

The energy of the words and the spirit which flashed from her daughter's eyes struck Dorothea. She said eagerly, with something of hope in her voice :

"Thee has a plan, let me hear it."

"Yes, mother ; and will thee promise not to interrupt till I make a complete statement ?" Dorothea nodded assent :

"We have five hundred acres, with a mortgage of twelve thousand dollars, and outstanding debts besides amounting to fifteen or sixteen hundred dollars. I propose to sell two hundred acres of land outright, the land that lies behind the orchard, taking in part of the woods beyond the far cornfield. This land ought to sell at forty dollars an acre at the lowest, or say forty-five dollars. That would give us to start with eight thousand dollars, perhaps nine thousand. I will keep out five or six hundred dollars of it, paying the rest over to the holders of the mortgage ; they of course will be willing to release the land sold. Then I propose to rent out one hundred acres, for the sake of getting it cultivated and for what share of the crops we can get out of it. Then, mother, there will be left two hundred acres, which I mean to farm in person. I mean to use some of the money that I take out of the sale of the land to buy

fertilizers, keeping enough to pay a year's interest on the remainder of the mortgage and the other debts. In the autumn I want to buy some fresh cows and bring up the dairy, so that in the winter and spring we can supply butter for market. And in the years to come, mother, Airlie will be free. It is the only plan that will keep the old home."

Robin pressed her hands together tightly and gazed anxiously at her mother. Dorothea sat with her head resting on the back of her chair. Her eyes were closed; the tears crept slowly from under the lids and over her wan face; her hands were clasped in her lap, she did not speak. Robin knelt softly at her side, put her arms about her, and said:

"What is it, mother dear? tell me, does thee object to the plan?"

"Oh, my child! my child!" was all she could say for a moment; then growing calmer she said: "The plan is noble, but I cannot see my child, my little Robin, working her youth away in sacrifice."

Robin sprang to her feet, exclaiming passionately:

"Look at me, mother. Ever since the day I put away my dolls and the old yellow spelling-book, I have told myself that I had a son's place to fill, and that it would be a proud day to me when thee and father would lean upon me, and I would be taking care of thee and of every thing at Airlie. Mother, that day has come, and I take my place by right. Thee has cared for me all the

days of thy life ; I will work for thee the rest of mine."

A long silence fell. Finally Dorothea spoke :

"I will not oppose thee, my child ; thee shall try thy plan, and I thank God reverently that I have such a son to lean upon." After a moment Dorothea continued in a resolute tone : "I only fear that such work will prove impossible to thee ; thee has had no experience ; therefore I must make one condition, and one only : thee must find some intelligent, thoroughly-respectable white man, one who has had practical experience on a farm, who will come here, for hire, of course, who will do the many things thee cannot do ; some one who will be in part overseer, do, in other words, what Kane is unable to do nowadays. Thee will need another farm hand anyway, and thee must choose some one who can live in the house with us."

"Mother, where can we find such a man ? I would much rather have only the ordinary hands to deal with, and Kane would be sufficient to advise. Think of all the years that he has farmed the land."

"True, my child, but since Kane has been crippled I have never relied so much on his judgment. He cannot get about, nor cope with the necessities as they arise, as a man can who has the full use of his limbs. Thee has had absolutely no practical experience, therefore thee must try to find some one who has practical knowledge of farming."

"There is no one in this neighborhood who would come in the way thee means, and I will never consent to take any one on shares."

"I think of one person who might be willing to come."

"Who, mother?"

"Jared Comly."

"I would never think of proposing such a thing to him, mother, to come here as an ordinary laborer; he would feel it almost an insult."

"It is no insult, daughter; thee mistakes a little when thee thinks there is no dignity in common labor. No young farmer starting out but has to work like a common laborer. Thee proposes to work thyself, side by side with thy men. Is it any more of an insult for Jared than for thee?"

"Only this difference, mother; I should be working for my own."

"Well, it only struck me that Jared has been back from the West since last August and doing nothing. The land about his own home is worked by his elder brother, so there is nothing for him to do there. He has some little means, but not enough to buy a farm of his own; he is looking for work, and I thought if thee offered him higher wages than the usual farm hand gets and his home here with us, it would be a pleasant arrangement. I should not be so anxious about thee all the time. In another year thee may be in a position to make it worth while for him to remain indefinitely with us."

These concluding words of Dorothea's, innocent as they were, sent a cold chill over the girl. She glanced quickly at her mother, but there was perfect unsuspicion in her face. She asked :

"In what way might I make it worth while for him to stay ?

"Why, thee might offer him a share in the profits of the dairy, if it should succeed." Robin breathed freely.

"I will think of it, mother, but I would rather have any one here than Jared Comly. Thee knows it is believed that he is hard to get along with. He is restless and never stays long anywhere."

"Yes, I have heard so, but I have always liked Jared and I think he is underestimated." Nothing further was said on the subject.

In a few days the plans were fully matured. As soon as the promise of the release of the land was obtained, a notice was posted up in the village of Airlie and the neighboring post-offices, to the effect that two hundred acres, partly in woodland and partly in cleared land, would be offered for sale at Airlie on such and such a day, and also that one hundred acres adjoining the village of Airlie were offered for rent. This created a great sensation in the neighborhood. People shook their heads; they knew it would have to come. They wondered what was to be done with the rest of the farm, if it too would be sold in time, and who would buy it ; more than that,

what would become of the two helpless women, burdened with debt and practically homeless? Perhaps they would leave the neighborhood entirely; perhaps Dick Elgar would help them out, he was rich enough to do it. Then they told each other what a pity it was there was no son to come to the rescue. They guessed that Dorothea would now see the folly of having given her daughter so much useless book-learning; if she had only brought her up sensibly like other girls, to brew and bake, sew and mend, she might have been depended on in this hour of need, and be of some comfort to her mother; as it was, who would feel like employing a girl whose only recommendations, beyond being strong and healthy, were that she could construe Greek and Latin and ride to hounds?

Therefore, it was like the bursting of a bomb when it became known that Robin Elgar would farm Airlie herself. And the neighborhood immediately divided into two factions, each loud in prophecy: some said she could do it, and do it well; some wagged their heads significantly and said, "We 'll see."

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIRST HARVEST.

IT was fortunate for the young farmer that the spring which had opened so well did not prove to be a very early one after all, for in spite of her exertions things were behind time. The feverish energy of the young woman was something new to the men, accustomed as they had become to a slipshod method of work, and it was a new thing for them to have a master's eye constantly upon them. One of the first things to be done usually in the very early spring, before the various plantings are begun, is to pick up and haul away the stones that have been turned up in the ploughing the year before, and which must be removed before the mowing machine passes over the young clover. These stones Robin had ordered Bill to pick up and haul away in the ox-cart. Bill showed signs of insubordination. He turned away quickly and muttered something about "not taking his orders from a woman nohow." Robin heard his words and noted the sullen look on his face. Calling out sharply to him to stop the cart, she said :

"As long as you stay on this farm you will obey me. I am master here ; if you are dissatisfied you can go. I will give you a day to decide whether you will obey me or leave."

She turned on her heel. Bill stayed, and the insubordination ended there. The ploughing was finally done, though it was later than the prescribed time before the corn was all in the ground.

One morning in the early June days, when Bill was at work in the vegetable garden and Saunders was working the potatoes, Robin, after watching them for some little time, took a look at the wheat which was coming on finely ; then went to the garden, which had had very little attention. She had planted out a few things the week before and the house plants had all been put out. She stood just inside the straggling hedge which enclosed it, and took in with one sweeping look the beauty and neglect of the place. Unlike most gardens in the country, it was entirely remote from the vegetable garden. At the back were tall stately trees, with vines clinging in green masses about their trunks, and early though it was in the season, they hung in great festoons from the lower branches. The beds were cut into diamonds, half-moons and long ovals, each bearing a perfect tangle of special flowers. Here was an oval bed of scarlet geraniums, there one of roses just beginning to bloom ; here was a half-moon of mignonette which scented the entire garden, there was another of sweet peas ; while in some

of the beds rose up old-fashioned frameworks covered over with running vines, and some of the beds were bordered with sweet alyssum. The paths between were thick and springy with young clover, which was as soft under foot as the finest moss. On each side of the entrance were huge bushes of hydrangea, which had been planted forty years before by Gilbert's father. At the end of one straight path was the old pear tree, where the swing used to be, but which now had a bench running round its gnarled trunk. The girl stood and gazed lovingly around her and said to herself :

"When shall I ever again have time to sit under the old pear tree, and when will this wilderness of vines and weeds ever get any attention, I wonder?"

With a sigh she turned to come away, for there was poultry to be looked after. As she raised her eyes she saw a man just coming through the hedge. It was Jared Comly. As soon as she glanced at him, he pulled off his hat, and coming rapidly towards her he said rather gravely :

"Good morning, Robin ; I came to see thee about a matter of business. Has thee a few moments at thy disposal?"

"Certainly, Jared ; as many as thee pleases. Will thee come to the bench under the pear tree ? I was just lamenting to myself the neglected condition of the garden," she said as she led the way and seated herself on the bench, motioning him to seat himself also. Jared,

as she spoke, had glanced absently at the flower beds. He stood a moment, holding his hat in his hand and gazing down at Robin as she sat on the bench waiting for him to begin, and at last he said :

"I hear thee is going to farm Airlie thyself, and that thee contemplates taking some one in the capacity of overseer ; and I have come to offer myself."

Robin drew a quick breath and pressed the palm of her hand with sudden force upon the empty bench at her side.

"I am afraid thee has been somewhat misinformed, Jared. It is true that I am going to try to farm, but I am not going to have an overseer ; we cannot afford it. We need an extra hand on the farm, some one experienced who will live at Airlie with us, and be useful in any way when needed, but who will, of course, work as a regular farm hand."

"Well, I am willing to take such a place," he answered briefly ; and as he spoke he eyed keenly the down-bent face of the girl.

"Jared, does thee think I would consent to take thee as a farm hand, paying thee ordinary farm wages ?"

"Why not ? I am not afraid of work. Does thee think I have never done it before, nor received small wages either ?" he persisted.

"But think what it would mean. Thee is masterful and fond of thy own way. Ay, I know it. Would thee be willing to be subordinate to a woman ? to receive

instructions from me? Why does thee seek such a place? it has nothing to offer a man of thy ambition." And she looked up at him suddenly, as if to read him through and through and fathom his motive. A slight color flushed his face. "Was there a challenge or a warning in her question?" he asked himself, but he replied rather grimly :

"There is certainly no special glory in such a position, but I am not afraid of work, nor of small wages either; and thee forgets it would be no small privilege to be able to be of use to thy mother and thee."

"I know of old how generous and kind thee can be, Jared. I shall never forget Christmas-eve, and all thee did for us afterwards," said Robin; and she faltered a little over the recollection.

"It was only what any man would have done for thee; don't think of it," he replied quickly.

There was rather a long pause, during which Jared stood immovable in the path, quietly waiting for Robin to turn it all over in her mind, furtively watching her the while. At last Robin rose and said :

"I think thee had better go in and talk it over with mother. I will go in with thee."

They left the garden and went into the house in utter silence. When Robin reached her mother's side she said:

"Mother, here is Jared, who has come to see about taking a hand on the farm. I think thee had better talk it over, and whatever thee thinks best and decides upon will meet my approval." And she left them together.

When she was far enough away to be heard by no one she stopped abruptly and said aloud :

"Robin Elgar, thee's a coward ; thee, who has never feared any thing in thy life, is afraid of that man ; now why?"

Having announced to herself this fact, she went on in her mind to try to define and reason out the cause. She said to herself : " There is something about Jared that is repellent to me ; there is an antagonism that I cannot fathom. He is honorable, and yet I distrust him. There is a suppressed something about him that always leads me to expect an outburst ; there is a persistence about him which baffles and annoys me ; and he has a motive for wishing to come here, beyond the mere work " ; then she added in her mind, after considering a moment, " and I think I know what that motive is." She set her lips together resolutely and said aloud with emphasis, " Never."

She went back to the house. As she entered the room she heard her mother saying in a more cheerful tone than she had heard for many a day :

" Then, that is satisfactory to thee, Jared?"

" Perfectly so, Cousin Dorothea " ; for Jared gave the title of cousin from custom and courtesy.

" Robin, my child, it is all settled ; Jared will come here just before harvest. He will be thy right-hand man. I have told him we can only pay a little above the ordinary wages, but that thee and I had decided we might offer another year a half share in the dairy, if

every thing is satisfactory. And we will give Jared the southwest chamber, for we must make him comfortable. I wish I could get about and attend to things myself ; but, Robin, thee will see that every thing is nice and bright, will thee not ? ”

Robin saw that her mother was more like her old self than she had been at all since her father's death.

“Yes, mother, dear, I will see that every thing is as nice as it would be if thee could do it thyself. I am glad thee looks so bright.”

Then followed a strictly business talk, upon which Robin insisted, defining clearly what their position to each other would be, the exact wages to be paid, etc. She laid before him the affairs of the farm and her plans for reducing the debt ; and then followed a long discussion about the condition of the farm and the length of time it would take to bring it up to its old flourishing condition. Robin ended by remarking :

“It will take years to do it, and years of unceasing toil and struggle ; but I am not afraid.” Then she added : “I think thee had better come and take a look at things ; thee will understand the difficulties and all that there is to be done.

As they went from spot to spot and Robin showed him what work had been done since she took hold of things. Jared was utterly amazed at the knowledge and judgment the girl had shown. He would never have believed a woman could have so much capacity and brain

outside of her own "sphere," as he called it in his mind ; for Jared was one of the many men who still had a "sphere," and a narrow one, in which woman-kind was forever to revolve in unthinking content. But as he walked along and listened to Robin as she pointed out the terrible effects that the non-fertilization had had on her father's farm, and how the want of proper drainage had affected a certain part of the land, and her proposed remedies, he was forced to an admiration and respect for this girl's mind that he would have thought it impossible to bestow upon any but a man. And it began to dawn upon him before they got back to the house that he would have something to deal with in this strong, young spirit that he had not reckoned upon. He ran over in his mind different points. She had received a far deeper, wider education than he himself had. She was as daring a rider as he, and here to-day she had stepped into his own realm and met him with as sound a judgment and quick an insight as he could have shown. The experience only was lacking, and he said to himself :

"Jared, my man, thee has a hard road before thee to travel. Win if thee can ; she is worthy of all the reverence and heart-throbs a man can give her." He took his leave almost as soon as they reached the house, and as he disappeared down the lane Robin thought as she looked after him :

"I wonder how it will work ? I have grave misgivings ; but mother is more happy over it than she has

been since dear father's death. She likes Jared, and that ought to be enough for me."

The middle of June came, bringing with it the day of the sale of the land at Airlie; and a motley collection of farmers and villagers assembled, who, as they arrived and hitched their horses, immediately disappeared around the corner of the house and through the orchard to the spot where the bidding was to be. The land that was for rent had been taken, almost as soon as offered, by a young farmer living "up the road" beyond Airlie village. Before the bidding began, a good deal of time was spent in going over the acres offered for sale, in examining the timber, and in talking over the deplorable condition of Gilbert Elgar's affairs; and it was whispered about, "on good authority," that "Jared Comly was coming to live at Airlie and farm the land on shares"; which was promptly denied, and a statement made, "coming from the family," that "Robin was going to farm the land herself, with Jared only to do the rough work and play watch-dog to the two women." This last statement was passed from man to man, with the prophecy that "they all knew how that would end, and they'd bet on Jared."

The sale was finally made, and the two hundred acres were knocked down at forty-three dollars an acre. Robin, in the due course of time, paid down with a thankful heart something like eight thousand dollars, keeping, after paying the expenses of the sale, a sum which was to go towards fertilizers and the buying of

several Jersey cows. The time passed rapidly between the day of the sale and the commencement of harvest. Jared had taken up his home at Airlie, and had begun work. He went through the preliminaries, seeing that the machines were all in working order. The first step in the harvest was taken in the cutting of the clover ; then the most important work of all the year was at hand, the cutting of the wheat.

It was a hot day in late June, when with the early dawn the heavy machine, reaper and binder combined, entered the wheat-field, with Jared riding one of the horses, the two men, Bill and Saunders, following, one with a cradle to cut the grain in the corners of the fence where the machine could not reach it. There was a moment of waiting, and Robin, for whom they paused, appeared. A broad-brimmed hat covered her head and shielded her face, a plain cotton gown, with only a wide hem at its foot, fitted her tall, robust young figure ; her feet were encased in stout, heavy boots, while her hands, bare and brown, were left to the mercy of the hot June sun.

"Are you all ready?" she called. Then she sprang lightly into the little high seat, perched in mid-air upon the binder. With a creaking, whirring sound Jared started the horses, and in a few moments a wide path was left behind them, with neat little bundles of wheat, deftly tied, lying in its track at equal distances apart. Soon Bill and Saunders were gathering them up, and one

after another the golden shocks rose up where a moment before only the growing grain had been. When the morning was half spent Jared stopped his horses, jumped down, went to Robin's side, and, looking up in her face, said, anxiously :

"I cannot bear to think of thee exposed to this burning sun. Is there no other way?"

Robin had with watchful eye been regulating the levers of the machine, or, when necessary, guiding with her hand the long wisps of grain as they rushed past from the sharp knives into the little wooden half-trough, whence it issued in neatly-tied bundles. She paused, with uplifted hand, and smilingly replied, "None." Then seeing how really distressed he looked, she added lightly :

"Why, Jared, I've ridden on this old machine many a time, and it is not half so hard work as riding thirty miles after a fox." But Jared did not smile in response.

"I wish I could do it all for thee," he said.

"But thee cannot," she returned decidedly. He went back to his horses, and the machine took up its round again. Never after that during the reaping did he venture to express his concern or evince any feeling. He was quick to see when she needed help, and gave it silently. Little did the girl know how much he saved her; how many rough places he smoothed and made easy for her feet.

All through the remainder of the harvest she was

invariably in the field with her men, but it was often with aching limbs and tired muscles. When she entered the house, foot-sore and weary, her mother's loving, anxious eyes would follow her every movement, and her gentle voice would ask :

"Tired, daughter?"

"Not very, mother," and she would stoop to kiss the faded face.

As time wore on, and Jared pursued his own way with no apparent concern for her, she began to feel with relief that she had made a mistake in thinking he had any special motive in coming to Airlie. Towards the end of harvest, when they were getting through with the hay and oats, Robin stood watching the last load of hay leave the field, just at sunset one day, when a couple of horsemen passed. They saw her in the field, and drew rein. They were Henry Standish and Thaddy Watkins. Robin took off her rough hat and tossed it on the ground, and with no thought for her appearance stepped forward to the hedge which separated the field from the turnpike. Jared barely acknowledged their presence by lifting his hat in return for their salutation.

"Miss Elgar, I can think of nothing but Maud Müller as I look at you," said Standish, reining in his horse, as with uncovered head he rode close beside the hedge.

"Is it because of the torn hat and rustic health? or because of your likeness to the Judge, who

“ ‘Drew his bridle in the shade
Of the apple-tree to greet the maid,’ ”

said she, looking at him smilingly.

“Not because of the Judge, you may be sure, for I always thought the Judge a shabby cur to leave the maid at all. But I have not seen you since one night last winter at Captain Esten's when——”

Here Standish stopped abruptly, for he suddenly remembered the tragedy which had ended the night for the girl before him. A shade fell over her face as she gravely replied :

“I remember ; it seems a long time ago ; but I had not heard that you were in the neighborhood.”

“I came for only a few days. I am going abroad, and came to say good-bye to the Estens. Miss Harmony is going to drive me over to Airlie on Sunday.”

“I am very glad. Will you say to Harmony that we shall expect you both to stay to tea with us? and you, too, Mr. Watkins,” turning to him.

“Well, I mus' say I 'm dlad you did n' leave me out ; I mos' thought you would n' speak to a fella at all.” After a few more words the men rode on.

“Jove !” said Standish, “what a superb-looking woman she is.”

“Yes,” said Thaddy, “there ain' a girl in all Marylan' can hol' a can'le to her ; an' what a sof' snap Comly has. I tol' 'm so th' other day, an' he mos' bowl' me over with a savage look.”

"Is he in love with her?"

"Yes, no ques'tion of it."

"Well, I am not surprised at it; but he strikes me as being rather a churlish fellow, not half worthy such a woman."

And Standish turned in his saddle for a last glimpse of Robin, standing in the hay-field with the golden sunset behind her.

CHAPTER XIII.

UNDER THE NEW RULE.

ROBIN entered the house one day at noon and said triumphantly :

“Well, mother dear, my first harvest is over, all but the threshing.”

“Now thee will take a good rest, daughter, will thee not ?”

“I cannot just yet, mother, for the threshing begins day after to-morrow, and I must ride down this afternoon and see if Cousin Deborah will come and take charge of the kitchen and the men’s table ; for there will be at least twenty men in all to cook for, and I shall have my hands full.”

“Why, child, what is thee going to thresh now for ? Why does thee not stack the wheat until fall, as thy father always did ?”

“Well, mother, I ’d rather thresh now. We are in for a dry spell, and if I can get the grain all threshed and under cover there will be no risk of losing any. The men and the engine are at Captain Esten’s. We are the

next place, and I have engaged them for the day after to-morrow."

"Then thee will get no rest for several days yet?"

"No, mother, thee knows there is never much rest in the life of a farmer who farms in earnest, and there will be less in ours for the next few years; for we are behind in every thing. And thee knows after the threshing is over there will be hauling to do, and while Jared is doing that I must see to having the hedges clipped and to the mending of the fences in some of the fields. Then there are ditching and clearing to be attended to. Does thee remember the little triangular piece of land beyond the ice-pond? Well, I am going to have it cleared and drained. Then, mother, I must begin to take the dairy personally in hand. I want to make it a feature of the farm. I am beginning to wonder anyway if a dairy farm would not pay better altogether."

Dorothea sat with folded hands and watched her child as she enumerated the work to be done. There was a flush of eagerness on Robin's face which betokened that she was thoroughly in earnest and that she was absorbed, heart and soul, in her undertaking. And Dorothea sighed to think how greatly she herself was incapacitated from taking her share of the labor in-doors.

"If I could only get about and help thee, but instead I am a helpless drag on thee, my child."

"Oh, mother, if thee does not wish to break my heart, never utter such words again. It is my delight that

I am doing for thee, and for Airlie, just what thy son would do were he here. If father were only here too, that I might be doing for him !”

“But, daughter, to think that thee, a woman, should be the only thing between me and homelessness; that thee should have to toil in the sun and rain, be around with rough men and wear thy young life out in drudgery. It is almost more than I can bear.”

“Mother, this farm is ours, and I am only working for my own. It is my pride and joy that I am strong and well; and, mother, listen: the day has gone by for the young women of the family to stay housed and sheltered. Thousands of them are doing the work of brothers and sons, only no one realizes it; but a change is certainly afoot, and the time has come when all things are opening alike to the daughters as well as to the sons.”

“Child, what does thee mean? Where did thee get any such notion? I hope thee does not mean that women from choice will go out and do the things men do? Heaven forbid any such thing!” said Dorothea, startled.

“Mother, since I have been at work among my hands, my experience, short as it has been, has already opened up to me an entirely new view of things. I dare not tell thee all that is in my mind, but I am trying to work out some problems far harder than any thing I ever met with in calculus.”

“I beg of thee, my daughter, to put any dangerous

notions away, such as are becoming the fashion nowadays, about the equal rights of men and women. What do women want more than to be as happy as we were in the good old days, when we stayed at home, spun, did the mending, looked after the house, and did not wish to go out of our sphere and compete with men, and become unfeminine?"

"Mother, thee has let thy mind run ahead of what we commenced to speak of. Suppose I had helplessly let the old home go away from us; what would have become of us? There is many a thing that lies under a woman's hand that she can do that she should do, no matter if it is in a man's province; but I want to ask thee a question"; and Robin put her arm around her mother's neck.

"Does thee think, mother, I have become unfeminine, or rough, or any less a woman, because I have gone out of the beaten path, and have taken a man's work on my shoulders?"

"Why, no, my daughter."

"Does thee think, mother dear, that in the future I am likely to become any less a woman, any less gentle to thee, any less nice in my instincts, any less lovable or lovely in thy sight, because I shall stand side by side with my men, a common laborer like them?"

"No, dear child; I think, on the contrary, thee will be rather a softening influence upon them than the reverse."

"I am answered, mother."

"What does thee mean?"

"Nothing; thee was answering one of the problems in my mind, that is all"; and she smiled gently. Dorothea looked puzzled. She said:

"I am only afraid, daughter, thee will become touched by this new movement of discontent among the women of our country."

"I am touched by it, mother, and so is every woman as soon as she stands upon her own feet to battle for her daily bread."

"But, child, where does the discontent lie? The shielded home-life, with its simple duties, is clearly the place for women. We have our men to represent us. Surely thee does not wish to go out of the path thy mother's feet have always walked in?"

"The path thy feet have walked in was smooth and fair, and thee was content. Thee speaks of men representing us, but what sort of a representation is it when the class to be represented does not choose its representatives? and when the self-styled representatives never give ear to the wants or cries of those for whom they stand?"

"Oh, my child, thee is talking heresy."

"No, mother dear, not heresy, only truth."

Dorothea was distressed. She hardly comprehended her daughter. A half-misgiving, one which was often uppermost in her mind, came over her: that hers and

Gilbert's plan of education had been a mistake ; and she vaguely felt troubled at the tendency in Robin to break away from the cherished time-honored opinions. She remembered that Gilbert himself had held some of these strange opinions in regard to the place women should hold in the world, and she sighed to think that Robin perhaps came honestly by her queer, independent notions, and that from childhood she had always been encouraged by her father to express them.

But her reflections were cut short by the appearance of Jared, who had come in from the fields a few moments before, summoned by the big bell to the mid-day meal. Simple as the meal often was, it was always graced by a few flowers from the garden. The plain joint, flanked by a small dish of "shoulder" for Jared, together with several vegetables, was served with a daintiness not often found in a farm-house. And the pretty china bowl of apple-float, covered with rich cream, made a tempting dessert for any one. Robin helped her mother to her accustomed place at the table, then took her own as carver at the other end ; and as she sliced off the juicy mutton she said :

"Jared, I am going to ride down and see if Cousin Deborah will come and stay through threshing with us."

"Yes ? and will thee ride by The Hatch while thee is out and see if Captain Esten is really going to be through with his wheat to-morrow, and tell him we expect the thrasher and the men here the following day. I am going

to put the reaper and mower away this afternoon and do several odd jobs."

"Very well ; and Jared, I think the lawn might be mown to-morrow."

"Yes, I will attend to it."

She continued : "I am anxious, as soon as the threshing is over, to see to the breaking of the two colts. The younger one, as I told thee, I want for riding and driving, although he is rather too powerful, perhaps, for a woman. The other will look well in the team, I think."

As Robin spoke of the colts, a sombre, darkening look swept over Jared's face. He said abruptly :

"Thee means to break them thyself ?"

"Why not ?" she asked quietly.

"I do not take much stock in women doing such things ; thee runs great risk thyself and risk of ruining the horse ; thee 'd better let me take them in hand," he said, almost curtly.

"Yes, daughter, thee had better let Jared break them both ; it is too dangerous for thee," said Dorothea.

"Thee need not fear mother ; I shall have no trouble ; both the colts follow me all over the field. I can do any thing with them almost that I please. I think I can prove to Jared that, although I differ radically with him as to the methods of breaking a horse, and also as to what a woman should and should not do, these two horses will be in little danger of being ruined, and will

be about as manageable as any that have ever been raised on the farm. I have no objection to Jared's breaking the colt for the team, but no one shall lay hand upon the other." And then turning to Jared she said :

"As soon as thee has time, I wish thee would cut me two poles ; I shall need them in teaching the young one to drive."

She spoke resolutely and coolly. For a moment the two young people measured each other's strength ; then Jared said quietly :

"Very well ; but bear in mind that almost any young horse will kick when first harnessed to poles."

"I shall run no risk," she replied gently. "Please tell Saunders to saddle Comanche and bring him up." And she went to make ready for her ride to Ivanwold.

The afternoon wore away. Dorothea sat in the porch knitting. Every now and then she would glance down the lane, watching for her daughter's return. Every thing was silent. The trees stretched their long shadows across the grass ; occasionally the fluttering and twittering of the chimney-swallows could be heard as they returned homeward from their wanderings, and darted down the tall chimneys that towered high above the peaked roofs of the old house. Suddenly Adsum dashed off the porch, down the steps, and stood looking down the lane. Dorothea knew his faithful ears had heard the approach of horse's hoofs far away on the pike, long before her keen eyes could discern the presence of any

one. Robin soon trotted up through the long grass, bending her head low, now and then, to escape the branches of the trees as she rode under them. She went, as her habit was, straight to the stables. There she encountered Jared, who came forward.

"Never mind me, Jared, I will unsaddle Comanche."

But Jared paid no heed ; he held up his arms to help her dismount, put her gently on her feet, and before she could utter a word he was leading Comanche to the stable. She turned and ran lightly to the house, joining her mother on the porch.

"Mother, Cousin Deb will come and help us through threshing. And from whom does thee think she 's had a letter?"

"Not from Richard?"

"Yes, from Dick. It seems he has been off in charge of an expedition to Norway and Sweden, having been sent by some scientific society connected with the University ; but the German name of it is so long and in such small text I cannot make it out. It seems Dick has written some paper on Geology, and has had an invitation to lecture before the Linnæan Society in London ; and he has been away from Heidelberg for months, lecturing and exploring. He has not had any of Cousin Deb's letters, apparently, for he has not heard any thing in connection with us. But here is the letter ; I brought it for thee to read."

Dorothea took the letter, opened it and read it through

eagerly, laying it down upon her lap with a sigh of disappointment.

"It is the letter of an enthusiast, a scholar. It almost seems like poetic justice for Henry's son to become a scientist, for he was always interested in such things himself and had made a collection of all sorts of stones, arrow-heads and pressed flowers. I have often wondered what became of that collection. It is evident from Richard's letter that he must be held in high esteem by many of the German scientific men. He will become, if he is not already, a distinguished man. But there is not one word of returning to his own country, and only a message of love to me. It was just as I told him long ago it would be ; the tie is kept only in my heart."

"Oh, well, mother, it is not as if we had learned to depend on Dick and then been deprived of him. We can do very well without him, and we shall undoubtedly be proud of him some day. But I must go and change my habit. Evan is coming to tea, and we are going to read afterwards." And she entered the house to make the necessary toilet.

Two days later all was bustle and life on the old farm. All day long the steady whirr of the engine kept up, and above it at times the shouts of the men could be heard. Higher and higher rose the pile of straw, and steadily the little stream of golden grain poured out, each bushel being registered before it was gathered up, tied in its bag, and tossed into a cart. All day the wagons hauled the

wheat from the field to the machine, and all day the big hogshead mounted on wheels carried water to the engine. From the house savory odors were borne out on the summer air. Deborah, with big apron and sleeves rolled up above her elbows, plied back and forth between the kitchen, pantry and dining-room. Dorothea had been wheeled into the inner kitchen, where she diligently pared apples for the men's pies, or prepared the vegetables and daintier things for the house table. Robin, with her face covered with the dust and smoke from the engine, seemed to be everywhere at once, though Jared with his older experience was the leading spirit of the day. He was director and general in command. His face and arms were as black as the shining faces of the negroes about him. During the day several young farmers, whose threshing was done, or who were waiting their turn for the engine, lounged about to see how things were progressing. Captain Esten rode over, hitched his horse, and asked in his loud, hearty voice :

"Well, how's the young farmer? My eye! but you are as energetic here as in the saddle. How much wheat are you going to have?"

"I think about eight or nine hundred bushels."

"Is that all?"

"Yes; you know, Captain, the farm has run behind: but next year I am going to put more land in wheat, and I am going to fertilize heavily, and I hope to have a larger crop."

"I'll bet you'll have more wheat than any of us old dogs, and that you'll turn out the model farmer of the neighborhood. Will you get through threshing to-day?"

"I hope so, but if not we shall finish before noon to-morrow."

"By the way, Miss Robin, when can you go fox-hunting? these moonlight nights are superb." There was silence for a few moments; then Robin replied gravely:

"Captain, I do not feel that I can join you. I have not felt that I could chase a fox with any heart. The last hunt, father was with me, and——"

"I understand, dear child"; and the Captain laid his big hand gently over one of Robin's. Just then Kane came hobbling up and said:

"Miss Rob, look yere a minute, please." And thus called away, the girl walked off with Kane, to consult about some slight hitch in the work.

The day passed and the sun went down, to rise again upon another busy morning of threshing. But by eleven o'clock every thing was over, the machine and men disappeared, and all was quiet again at Airlie.

A week or two passed before Robin found time to try her hand on the young colt which she had planned so long to break. She remembered the time, years ago, when she had seen Dick break Comanche, and the picture of him as she recalled it, sitting astride the wild, plunging creature with knees pressed into its sides, the sun shining on his uncovered head. She remembered

how her childish heart had thrilled at the sight, and she smiled to herself to think how vastly different the work before her would be, and how different the methods employed by a man and those a woman used to accomplish the same thing. Of course she knew she never could cope with a wild creature, such as Comanche had been ; that she had not the physical strength to handle such an animal ; but if Comanche had been daily accustomed to the approach of his master from the time he was taken away from his dam, would he have been the wild, untamed creature which Dick had to conquer by brute force ? Would not he have been as gentle and easy to manage as she felt sure her own colts would prove ? After all, was there not a force in the world as potent as that rude, rough, over-riding power that men wield ? she asked herself. And she leaned upon the gate that separated her from the field in which the young three-year-old was grazing. She gazed at him admiringly and knew it would not be long before she would be upon his back. She entered the field and gave several low cries. As the young creature trotted up with two or three whinnies, Robin drew from her pocket several lumps of sugar, which he took from her hand without the slightest hesitancy, she stroking him the while, and uttering soft, endearing names. Then he allowed her to lead him all about the field by his forelock, and even stood patiently while she put a halter upon him, which she had carried over her arm. She then walked away a few paces and he followed, whinnying for more sugar. At last she

leaned her arm and weight across his back, he only tossing his head a little, she stroking him all the time with her other hand. In a moment, with a spring she was sitting erect upon his back. The unaccustomed weight was a little more than even his nature could brook. He tried several vigorous shakes and tossed his head high in the air, but the object was immovable. With one hand Robin held fast to his mane, with the other she stroked his arching neck, speaking to him all the time in gentle tones. After backing with her, and trying to rub her off against a tree, he finally stood perfectly still, apparently resigned to the inevitable. Then it was that she began to urge him to move. He trotted a few steps, stopped and considered, then suddenly started off in full gallop. It was by no means easy to keep her seat on his slippery back, but Robin had not ridden all her life in vain. As they tore round the field, she caught a sudden glimpse of Jared running towards her at full speed, with Kane hobbling along behind, both evidently expecting to see her thrown. But as suddenly as he had started the colt stopped, and Robin found herself still on his back and little the worse for the hard gallop. She sat still a moment, then lightly jumped down and handed out a rewarding lump of sugar. Jared, seeing her safe on her feet, paused and leaned against the fence, where Kane soon joined him.

"Deed, Miss Rob, you rode splendid. I wish Mister Gilbert could seen you."

"I never had a better ride in my life, Kane. When

he 's had more experience he 'll have a fine gait. Will you go and bring me the saddle and bridle, please?"

"Robin, has not thee had enough for to-day?"

"No, indeed, Jared; I must strike while the iron is hot."

"Thee is lucky to have so gentle a creature to deal with; if he 'd been like some horses I 've seen thee would have been thrown long ago."

"But thee forgets, Jared, I 've been gradually preparing him for nearly three years for this very day, and behold the result. It is not because he is so innately gentle, for he comes of a fiery race. Thee will find the other colt gentle, too, for I have taken the same pains with him. And I think my method better than thine."

"How so?"

"Thee would have conquered by brute force alone; I have conquered by persistence and love." As she spoke she glanced at him as he still leaned against the fence. The expression which came over his face held her spellbound. It was an unguarded moment for Jared; he spoke slowly and softly:

"I do not know that persistence and love always conquer; I have not found it so."

He paused. There was a dangerous flash from his eyes, which changed and softened to one of passionate pleading as he met Robin's steady gaze. For a moment they faced each other; then Jared recalled himself, the softness died out of his face, giving place to

a stern, resolute look. He pulled his hat down over his eyes and strode away, just as Kane came back with saddle and bridle.

Robin still stared after him, and even Kane turned an inquiring look upon the retreating figure, which soon disappeared round an angle of the house and was lost to view. Then the young mistress turned again to the colt and commenced putting on the bridle.

"'Deed, Miss Rob, you 's puttin' that bridle on very quare."

"So I am, Kane ; there, that is better. No, I do not want the martingale."

The rest of her experiences with the young horse were of a more spirited nature, but at last the lesson was over, and she went slowly to the house, pondering over Jared's words.

CHAPTER XIV.

JARED COMES "WITHIN THE MEASURE OF WRATH."

THE hours that followed Jared's rash betrayal of the morning were troubled and uneasy ones for the two young people on the farm. Robin was wretched and uncomfortable. The very thing she had dimly foreseen and feared had come to pass; all her misgivings, which had been lulled to sleep by Jared's seeming unconcern, were startled into life by the unguarded words that had fallen from his lips. There could be no mistaking what he had partly given utterance to, and there was no mistaking the look of unutterable love that had flashed over his face as she stood and looked at him. What could she do? how get away from facing his unwelcome love? She might dismiss him, but upon what ground? He had not declared himself, he had not asked any thing of her. She went over and over the words he had partly spoken, their tone, their accompanying expression. She had gone silently and with lagging step into the house to ponder over it and to decide what she must do; but she could find no light anywhere.

She knew she was in no way to blame ; she had never shown him any thing but kindly consideration. Surely he could never have fancied that because they had been thrown together day after day, and had worked side by side, she felt any thing more for him than friendly interest ? She then recalled with a pang the many kindnesses Jared had shown them : his help at the time of her father's death, his devotion to her mother since, and her mother's very evident respect and liking for him. She asked herself if it would ever be possible to care for him, and emphatically came the answer ringing through her heart and brain, “ never.”

Dinner passed in silence and the afternoon wore away slowly. The hour for the evening meal came. The table, with its bright, soft lamp-light, its handful of bright geraniums, looked cheerful in the approaching twilight of the August day. Robin, dressed in a soft muslin gown, was leaning upon the railing of the porch. The afternoon had brought no relief to her disturbed mind ; there was a troubled look in her deep, expressive eyes which would not fail to attract her mother's attention.

“ Come, daughter,” Dorothea called from the dining-room, where she was already seated at the table. Robin turned at her mother's call as if loath to leave the silence and fast-gathering twilight of the porch. She turned lingeringly and entered the dining-room. The lamp-light fell full upon her face, and her mother instantly exclaimed :

"Thee is as white as a ghost, child ; is thee not well ?"

"It is nothing, mother ; I believe the colt tired me this morning, that is all."

"Where is Jared ?"

"I do not know ; he is probably only late in coming in to-night." Dorothea turned to Joppa.

"Go to Mr. Jared's door and see if he is in his room ; tell him supper is ready ; if he is not there, ring the bell for him from the end of the porch."

It was soon made evident that Jared was not in the house, for the clear tones of the bell rang out in the evening air, but they did not bring him, and the two women were left to finish supper alone. Dorothea lingered at the table a long time in the hope that he would come, then finally gave orders for them to keep supper for him. The short summer evening grew late. Finally Dorothea, who had glanced repeatedly at the clock, said :

"When did thee last see Jared, Robin ?"

"Not since dinner, mother."

"Did he say any thing about having any business that would call him away ?"

"No ; I do not think I spoke with him at dinner."

"It is very strange," continued Dorothea ; "I never knew him to stay away so long without telling us. I hope nothing is amiss. He has not seemed like himself all day ; I thought he was almost irritable at dinner."

Robin, seeing how really anxious and restless her

mother was and how often she glanced at the clock, rose and went to the back porch where the three farm hands were smoking.

" Kane, do you happen to know where Mr. Jared went after dinner ? "

" I don' think he wen' any w'eres, miss ; his horse ain' been out o' the stable but ain' nary one of us seen 'im."

She came back through the house and stood on the long, silent porch gazing out into the night, then she went down the steps, and down the lonely lane, glancing keenly under each tree, trying to pierce the darkness and gloom, but all was silent. She lingered by the roadside a moment, listening intently for a step, then turned and went swiftly back to the house. From there she went to the stables and barn. At the stable door she took the lantern down from its hook, lighted it and went round to the upper door of the barn which led to the hay-loft. Just what impulse led her to the barn and loft she could not define. She stepped softly through the door and flashed the light about. Almost instantly the feeble rays fell upon Jared lying prostrate, his face buried in his arms. His attitude was one of weary despair. Robin could not tell whether he was asleep or feigned it. No sound of breathing reached her keenly-strained ear. She dared not approach nor make any move, for she felt that she was looking upon him in his hour of weakness, at a time when he had abandoned himself to some emotion, of which she felt sorrowfully that she might perhaps be

the cause. She softly drew back and went quietly to the house. She knew it would be a great relief to her mother to know where he was. She said to the men, as she went to the back porch :

"One of you had better go to the barn and see if Mr. Jared has not fallen asleep on the hay. Wake him, if he is there, and then shut up for the night." She went into the sitting-room and said cheerfully : "I have sent one of the men to look for Jared in the hay-loft ; he may be asleep there."

In a few moments Jared's quick, firm step was heard on the porch, and he appeared almost instantly in the doorway. His face was stern, almost haggard, and strangely pale. He looked like a man who had been through some conflict and had made up his mind to bear the result with set teeth.

Dorothea looked at him intently, then said :

"Thee is ill, Jared."

"No, Cousin Dorothea ; I was rather more tired than usual this afternoon and I fell asleep in the loft just before supper." He shot a keen glance across at Robin ; then he added abruptly : "Good-night." He turned on his heel and left them, giving them no time to think of the untasted supper. They listened to his footsteps down the passage and up the stairs before either spoke.

"Something is certainly the matter with Jared ; did not thee notice how strange he looked, daughter ?"

"I think Jared has been working too hard ; he looks

pale. I think perhaps, mother, it might do him good for thee to talk to him in thy own sweet way. Tell him if he finds the work here not just what he expected, or if he thinks he has made a mistake in coming here, we do not want him to feel bound to remain."

"I will, daughter ; but might he not think perhaps I was conveying a hint?"

"Not if it comes from thee. He may feel dissatisfied in some way, and he would tell thee when he might perhaps not speak of it to me."

"Very well, daughter, I will talk to him."

Robin felt that she might thus give Jared a chance of severing his agreement with them at Airlie, without herself appearing in the matter and without any wound to his dignity. Perhaps he might really wish to go of his own accord and dislike to make any move in that direction at that time of the year, with the fall work looming up in the near future. Dorothea did broach the subject to Jared, in her delicate way. He instantly took fire at her first word, and said bluntly :

"If thee is dissatisfied with me, or if thee finds me useless, Cousin Dorothea, say the word and I 'm off."

It required all the tact Dorothea possessed to put the matter right. She talked long and earnestly to him, as a mother might have talked to a son.

The next few days were trying for them all at Airlie. Jared seemed utterly unlike himself ; he scarcely spoke at the table and hurried away before the two women

had finished. He worked incessantly, early and late. He commenced the clearing of the triangular land beyond the ice-pond, and it was long past their tea hour every night when he came in. He would eat a hasty supper, take a silent smoke in a grim way, and then disappear for the night. Robin was worried by his manner. She felt sure that he recognized the hopelessness of his passion, and that he was repenting of his unguarded words. But she could offer no remedy for the situation, nor could she make any explanation of his behavior to her mother. And the girl began to feel an irritation as his manner day by day became more brusque, until it was well-nigh unbearable. She saw her mother follow him with her eyes continually, in a perplexed way, and then turn them wistfully upon herself as if seeking the solution in her. Robin knew that her mother had begun to fathom Jared's secret, but she could not betray him even to her, and the situation became each day more awkward to the three.

August slipped by, and part of September. The autumn work was in progress: ploughing for wheat, corn-cutting and husking passed. Two or three fresh cows for the dairy were bought, and the market-wagon began its regular weekly trips to town, with butter, eggs, turkeys and other farm-produce. One early, cold morning in November the hay-wagon, loaded to its uttermost and drawn by five fine work-horses, with bits

of scarlet flannel tied in their bridles and braided in their manes, was ready to start for town, with Saunders as wagoner. Jared was in the market-wagon also ready to start. He had already made one or two ineffectual attempts to get off, when Robin hurried out of the house and called to him to stop. Jared drew in his horses, while a dark frown settled upon his face.

“Wait, Jared; I have a list of things I want from town.”

“Confound it all,” muttered Jared under his breath, and then in a rough voice he said aloud: “Be quick then; just like a woman never to think of any thing till the last moment. Does thee suppose I can wait here all night?”

Robin was transfixed. She wondered if she had heard aright. Was it Jared who had spoken to her in this masterful, rude way? was it he who sat scowling at her in the wagon? She turned to Saunders, who was still waiting to start, and said:

“Drive on, Saunders.” As soon as the hay-wagon moved, she turned to Jared and said quietly, and with dignity: “Thee forgets thyself, Jared; I do not merit such a rough speech from thee.” Then with gathering fire and a flash of sudden anger she added: “Thee must bear in mind that thee is not master at Airlie, and that I will not tolerate a rude speech from any of my hands.” She turned and hurried to the house, lest she should say more.

Jared started the wagon, and as he turned out of the lane to the pike he muttered between his teeth :

"Fool ! madman ! my accursed temper has ruined me. I must needs add to my driveling of the other day a display of ill-temper any brute would be ashamed of." He savagely shut his teeth together and drove for the next mile or two as if pursued by demons.

That night when he returned from town, Dorothea alone was waiting to give him his supper. He glanced anxiously around, then asked :

"Where is Robin ?"

"She walked to Airlie for the mail."

Jared rose hastily, saying :

"I will meet her ; it is very dark, and too late for her to be out alone."

He hastened toward the village, but had barely reached the foot of the lane when he discovered her tall figure standing motionless by the hedge, with Adsum close at her side. He strode rapidly toward her. When near enough for her to distinguish him, he said in a grave, earnest voice :

"Will thee hear me a moment ?" As he spoke he bared his head in the keen night air.

"Yes, Jared," she replied, gravely.

"I behaved like a brute this morning, and my conduct for weeks has perhaps forfeited any right to be listened to or pardoned. I have met with nothing but kindness from thee, and I have requited it in a way that makes

me blush as a man. Thee has good reason for not tolerating me any longer at Airlie, but I ask thee to forgive me, and show that forgiveness by allowing me to remain where I have had the only home I have ever known in all my life. I will never knowingly offend thee again."

"Thee will not find me unforgiving or ungenerous after such a full acknowledgment of thy words of this morning, Jared." And she put out her hand towards him as a token of forgiveness. But she sighed inwardly, for she felt that it was but a truce, and that outbursts of temper were too much a habit with Jared to be put aside permanently.

Jared took her hand and held it a moment, while he tried to read her face in the darkness ; then he gently raised it to his lips, and the two went in silence to the house.

When they entered the sitting-room Dorothea looked quickly from one face to the other, and noting the gravity of both she sighed, as if she had hoped to read some glad tale of love given and accepted.

For the few days following Jared seemed subdued, and almost stern ; but gradually he resumed the cheerful manner of his earlier days at Airlie. He was like a good comrade towards Robin ; he aided her in all her undertakings, and supplemented her in all her efforts with a self-effacement that brought peace and a temporary sense of security to the girl. Towards Dorothea he was

devoted and thoughtful, as he had ever been, and the mother's anxious heart was at rest. She felt that it would all come right ; Jared had been perhaps rather brusque and surly, but if he was in love that would account for it perhaps ; men were never even in temper nor like themselves when any thing unusual was the matter with them, she reflected. But she sighed for her daughter.

The early winter days which followed were the brightest and most peaceful that had fallen upon the farm since Gilbert's death. Mother and daughter both felt the influence of them, though Robin knew that it would never do to lull herself into forgetfulness. She had learned to know Jared thoroughly in the months that he had been under their roof, and she felt sure that under his seeming cheerful good-comradeship a fire lay smouldering, which only waited to break forth again into a blaze that might prove a conflagration to her, and to all of them on the farm. So, with an armed truce, between love held in check with an iron will on the one hand, and a woman's heart doubly guarded by indifference on the other, the winter months wore away.

CHAPTER XV.

AWAY FROM HOME FOR NEWS.

FAR away in another land the bright April sun was shining. A traveller stood in the Kaiser-Strasse, Frankfort. From the uncertain way in which he walked a few paces, then turned and paused, it was evident he was very undecided which way to bend his steps. At last, as if determined to come to some conclusion, he pulled a coin from his pocket, tossed it, looked intently at it, then as if he had made up his mind to abide by the result, he hurried to the Main-Neckar Station and jumped into a second-class carriage which was just about to pull out for Darmstadt, Heidelberg and Mannheim. It was Standish. He had spent all the early morning trying to decide whether he would go to Homburg, spend a couple of days in seeing the Taunus with its great Feldberg, or leave it out and go instead to Heidelberg and Mannheim. He had been lazily indifferent as to which direction he should take, and thus the chance throw of the coin committed him to go south instead of north.

Standish had spent the autumn in Paris and the winter in Rome ; had made his way idly back to Paris in the early spring, whence he had gone to Brussels, and now was bent upon doing the Rhine. His whole line of travel had been characteristic of him, and was marked by a certain indifference as to where he should go or what he should see when there. Had the coin directed him north instead of south, he would have been just as well satisfied. He knew no German, save a few words. It had been awkward for him on more than one occasion, when he had suddenly found himself at the end of his stock of phrases. He could ask for a "Weinkarte" at the *table-d'hôte*, or a "Postkarte" at the post-office, and he knew that "bitte" meant "please." But there came times occasionally when he could neither understand nor be understood ; then he would have recourse to French, and that failing a few forcible expressions in his vernacular generally produced plain sailing for a time.

The journey between Frankfort and Darmstadt was a short one, and the country lying between unattractive. Somehow, on reaching Darmstadt he concluded not to stop. This time he seemed to have no difficulty in making up his mind ; he continued his journey to Heidelberg, where he thought he might stay a day, or perhaps two, take in the Schloss and the University buildings, walk about the town, explore the beautiful Neckar-Thal, and then go on, either to Strasburg or Stuttgart, it made little

difference which. Arrived at Heidelberg, he scorned the cabs at the station, and having made up his mind to avoid the modern hotels that gayly flank both sides of the Anlage which led from the station, he turned into the Hauptstrasse; with the intention of walking its length till he should come to the market-place, where he knew would be found the Zum Ritter, one of the old inns of the town, and almost the only house in Heidelberg that escaped destruction during the burning of the town by the French two hundred years before. Only a few paces from the Ritter was the old Neckar Bridge, beyond which, upon the other side of the river, could be seen the vineyards along the slope of the Heiligenberg. To the right of the market-place one of the last of the side-streets connected with the Burgweg, which led up straight to the great balcony and court of the Schloss, standing grand and lofty above the old town, the most magnificent ruin in all Germany.

Standish reached the Ritter and was soon mounting the time-worn stone steps which led to the rooms assigned him in the top of the house. A little later in the afternoon, when he took his place at the *table-d'hôte*, it was to be greeted by the usual courteous "Mahlzeit" from the long row of unknown guests who lined either side of the table. He acknowledged the polite greetings of his neighbors, took his seat, and leisurely began studying the faces opposite to him, faces of every type and nationality. Finding none of any interest, he began on

his soup. A moment later his attention was attracted by the entrance of two men, evidently very much absorbed in a conversation carried on in German and accompanied by many quick gestures. Standish was somehow attracted by them. One of them nodded in return to several salutations, in the course of which his eyes rested for a moment upon the face of the new-comer. Standish was struck by the appearance of the man and the glance that was directed towards him. He said to himself :

“Where the deuce have I seen that man before ? his face is very familiar to me” ; but as no light came to assist his recollection he went on with his soup. Once after that his eye caught that of the unknown, half-familiar face across the table ; but it was only to assure himself that it was no one he had ever known or seen before, and it must be, of course, only a chance resemblance to some one. “ But to whom ? ” he asked himself.

During a pause in the dinner he fell idly to speculating as to the nationality of the man. He satisfied himself that he was undoubtedly German, for he was not only thoroughly German in accent, but also German in appearance. What a splendid physique and face the man had ; who but the Germans had such blonde hair and beards, such peculiarly blue eyes and ruddy skin ? Having satisfied himself as to the nationality, he fell to wondering to what station in life, what class, his unknown belonged. He could not be a soldier, although a long scar which lay between the eye and ear might be a sabre cut ; he could

not be a student, and he was decidedly too distinguished and handsome to be a professor; perhaps he was a baron or count, and had gained his scar in a duel. Finally Standish gave up altogether speculating about the unknown and continued his dinner.

Later in the day he climbed to the Schloss, wandered through a part of the vast ruin, took in the magnificent view of the town, then made his way back in the long twilight by the Burgweg to the old Neckar Bridge, which he crossed, climbed the slope through the vineyards to the Philosophenweg, and leisurely strolled along this beautiful walk, stopping now and then to gaze upon the exquisite panorama spread at his feet: the valley of the Neckar, the Schloss overhanging the quaint old town, the plain of the Rhine, the Cathedral of Speyer, with a background of the Haardt Mountains in the far distance.

"Jove! I never saw any thing finer," he said to himself. Then observing that the sun had disappeared, he hastened on to Neuenheim, where he intended to take his supper in one of the famous garden-restaurants which the students frequent so much; after supper he would go back to town by the New Bridge and bring up finally at the Ritter. When he reached Neuenheim the cool April day had just darkened into night, and the lights from the Philosophenhoehe gleamed out bright and cheerful in the chilly air. He entered the main room. As he casually ran his eye over the tables they all seemed to be full. He walked to the end of the room overlooking

the town, only to discover that there was no vacant table anywhere ; every one was occupied, presumably by students, drinking from clumsy mugs. He turned to walk back, when a gentleman seeing his dilemma rose from a seat in the corner near the window and made a courteous gesture of invitation ; Standish bowed, and as he approached said to himself : " Here ' s a go ; it is my great unknown." He took the proffered place and began to search his memory for his choicest German in which to express his thanks. Great was his astonishment when the German, with a cordial smile, replied in perfectly pure English :

" I assure you no thanks are necessary ; I am always glad to share with a countryman."

Standish looked amazed. Could this foreign-looking man be an American ? or did he think that he, Standish, was a German ? Seeing his amazement, the stranger quickly said :

" I beg pardon, but am I wrong in thinking you an American ?"

" No, there ' s no mistake about my being an American ; but you must pardon my astonishment in hearing you claim America as your own country." And Standish looked inquiringly at him as if to ask : " Who the devil are you anyway ?"

The stranger said, in answer to the look of inquiry :

" I was born in America, but I have not lived there in several years ; and I am always delighted to run across any of my own countrymen."

Here the conversation just begun was interrupted by the waiter coming for orders from the two men. The stranger said quickly, turning toward Standish :

"I beg you will allow me to do the honors of the place. I am an old *habitué* here, and there are certain dishes they make specialties of." He paused for Standish's consent. It was awkward, but he could do no less than courteously assent. After a few rapid words in German, the waiter poured out mugs of beer and left them. The conversation turned upon Heidelberg, the beauties of the Schloss and the Neckar valley. Standish volunteered the information that he was travelling rather without method ; he had no definite plans save to see something of Switzerland and get back to London in time to sail for home in June.

All during the conversation and the supper which followed he was continually haunted by the fact that his companion reminded him of some one ; but he could not think of whom. He gazed intently at him, studied every feature, watched every gesture. At last some chance movement revealed, in a flash, the puzzling reminder. There rushed back upon his mind the picture of a girl standing in a hayfield, with a rough straw hat at her feet and a glowing sunset behind her, framing her in golden light. He saw it all again : the hedge, the loaded wagon, the sturdy horses, the soft, waning summer day, and the woman's figure which stood out from all else. With a movement of relief that he had been able at last to trace the resemblance, he settled himself back in his

chair, becoming conscious at the same time that he had subjected his companion to rather a noticeable scrutiny. He found himself in turn gazed at in surprise, and he said, half-apologetically, half-amusedly :

"It is not perhaps very good form to trace resemblances, but I have been puzzled ever since I saw you to-day at *table-d'hôte* by a strange resemblance to some one I know in Maryland ; and you must pardon me for having spoken of it."

"Maryland, did you say? I do not often hear it mentioned ; it is my native State."

"Indeed? how odd. The person of whom I am thinking is a Quaker, and lives in a very quaint neighborhood of Friends. It struck me as rather unusual that I should come across a resemblance to her upon this side of the world." As he finished speaking his companion leaned forward and said quickly :

"I was born in that very same neighborhood, and my name is Elgar."

Standish was so astonished that he set his beer-mug down with a rattle upon the table, leaned back in his chair and simply stared. Then he broke out excitedly :

"Elgar, you say! By Jove! it is a Miss Elgar of whom you remind me. Can you be related to her?"

"She is my cousin. She and her mother are almost the only kinspeople I have. It is years since I have seen them." Then as Standish did not speak, so overcome was he with amazement, Dick went on :

"It is a strange coincidence that we should have been thrown together, and I hope you will tell me all you can about them, for I have heard very little from them, and it is only comparatively recently that I have heard of my uncle's death."

"By George, it's the most remarkable thing I ever had happen : that I should come across you, a stranger in a strange land, and have been struck with your resemblance to your own cousin, whom I saw almost the last thing before I left America."

Dick sat with slightly bent head and gazed attentively at Standish, who had spoken with considerable excitement ; then as he was about to speak, Standish bethought himself ; he pulled out a card-case and handed a card across the table to his companion, who bowed his head in thanks. Dick then said :

"Mr. Standish, suppose we walk back to the Ritter ? I should very much like to hear about my cousins, and it is evident you know them quite well, and are perhaps on a familiar footing at Airlie ?"

He spoke inquiringly. A slight flush rose to Standish's face, as he replied :

"No, Mr. Elgar, I cannot claim any familiar footing at Airlie. I should feel honored to be so privileged, but I have only known Miss Elgar and her mother through the Estens, whose place adjoins Airlie. You know them, perhaps ?"

"Esten ?" repeated Dick, as if trying to recall the

name, "no, I never heard of them; the name is quite new to me. With your permission we will go to my rooms where we can talk undisturbed. There is much I am anxious to hear."

The two men rose, left the Philosophenhoech and walked back over the new bridge. When they were upon the other side Dick called a cab, as if anxious to hurry to the news which awaited him. As they rattled over the rough streets, Standish began to recall scraps of gossip let fall at The Hatch at the time of Gilbert Elgar's death. This, then, was the "Cousin Dick" who was rich, who owned Ivanwold, who eschewed his own country, and who had practically turned a deaf ear to the distressing circumstances of his two helpless relatives. He remembered the Sunday he and Miss Esten had taken tea at Airlie, and that on coming away she had styled this very cousin "a selfish brute." Standish mentally told himself that it was odd a man would live away from his own country so long. He thought that perhaps he had stumbled upon the black sheep of the Elgar family, but he soon scouted that idea, as he remembered the air of dignity and elegance which surrounded his companion.

They alighted at the Ritter, and Dick led the way to his rooms. They were large and comfortable, facing the market-place and the Neckar Bridge. One thing which Standish particularly noticed was the immense cabinets filled with carefully arranged geological and

mineralogical specimens. A table with a clumsy, unwieldy lamp upon it, covered with manuscript and partly-corrected proof, gave evidence of some sort of literary work. "Evidently a scholar," Standish said to himself as he threw himself into an arm-chair and proceeded to make himself comfortable, after the example set him by Dick, who first offered him cigars or his choice of several pipes. After a pause, during which both men lighted up, Dick said, with a touch of eagerness that he had not shown before :

"Now, Mr. Standish, will you kindly tell me any particulars you may happen to know about my uncle's death? how did it happen?"

"It was said to have been a stroke of paralysis. He was found in the snow by his daughter and Comly, who were returning from a club which had been held at Captain Esten's Christmas-eve, a year ago. I was spending the holidays with the Estens, and was there when it happened."

"I understand from a letter, only received comparatively lately, that his death was a terrible shock; that he had been in good health up to the time they found him in the snow; is this true?" asked Dick.

"Perfectly true, so far as I know."

"I have heard nothing further from the family, and I am very anxious to know how they are, how they are getting along. Of course my uncle left them comfortably provided for; I have no anxiety on that point.

Pardon me for asking you for information I ought already to be in possession of."

Standish wondered how it could be that he seemed in such complete ignorance of the state of affairs at Airlie. He also wondered how he could possibly tell this man that his two nearest relatives were in dire poverty, with only a young girl's pluck and courage between them and homelessness. He said :

"Odd that they should leave you in ignorance of what a man would most like to know in regard to his nearest relatives."

Dick eyed him keenly, as if to fathom the meaning that might lurk in the seemingly careless remark. A flush rose to his face, and with a slight hauteur he said quietly :

"At the time of my uncle's death, which was in the Spring a year ago, I was not in Germany. I had been sent with an expedition to Norway and Sweden. I pushed pretty far north, and was most of the time out of reach of letters. When I finally returned to Heidelberg, it was to find the letter written months before announcing my uncle's death, but giving no particulars. I found that other letters had arrived during my absence which had been forwarded, but I had missed them at every point, and for some reason they never followed me back to Heidelberg ; so I have never received them. I have been shaping my work so that I can return to America. You must pardon my long explanation, but you see why

it is that I must seek information from you, a stranger." And Dick inclined his head with grave courtesy towards Standish.

"Confound the fellow, how much manner he has ; just like all the Germans," thought Standish to himself, forgetting that Dick had just claimed America. There was a pause, while the two men smoked in silence. Suddenly Standish asked casually :

"How long is it since you have seen your cousin, Miss Elgar ?"

"It is fully ten years. She was quite a little girl when I left America."

"She is a beautiful woman now. I wish you could have seen her as I saw her last." Standish knocked the ashes from his cigar, straightened himself in his chair, and with more energy than he had yet shown, launched forth into description :

"She was just getting through with harvest, and was standing in the hay-field. She had on some sort of a cotton gown, plain and simple, and she had thrown a disreputable old hat down at her feet. Her hair was disordered in little soft ripples ; the sunset behind her made a most glorious background, and I tell you she was simply superb."

"What do you mean when you say she was just getting through with harvest ?" Dick asked, struck more with the first part of Standish's description than with the last.

"Why, I mean she"—and Standish felt he had made

a mistake, but there was nothing to do but to face it. "Why, I may as well tell you frankly, Mr. Elgar, your uncle died heavily in debt, so the talk goes in the neighborhood. The farm is covered up with mortgages, and Miss Elgar has sold part of the land, rented out a part of it, and is farming the rest in person. Why, that brave girl went out every day last summer in the blazing sun, sowed, reaped and threshed side by side with her men."

"Good God ! Standish, is this true ?" and Dick sprang to his feet, asking rapidly : "Does my cousin work like a common laborer ? Where is my aunt that she allows it ?"

"Mrs. Elgar was almost a helpless invalid when I saw her, and there was absolutely no one but Miss Elgar to do any thing."

"But Kane is still there, is he not ?"

"Kane ? I do not recall any such person. I remember seeing an old negro, very much crippled, dragging himself over the place ; perhaps you mean him ?"

"Kane crippled ?—my aunt a helpless invalid ?—and little Robin a drudge ?" ejaculated Dick slowly, staring at Standish as if unable to believe or take in the full horror of the situation.

"Your cousin is not in the least like a drudge, Mr. Elgar. She manages and works that whole farm in a way that I feel sure neither of us men could do. She is, besides, decidedly a scholar. She reads Greek and Hebrew, and she rides as few American women can. By

Jove, she revolutionizes a man's idea as to the place woman should hold. I feel like taking off my hat every time I think of her."

This was the second glowing tribute Standish had given utterance to, and the full force of them did not strike Dick until afterwards. His mind was running upon the one great fact : that his uncle had died leaving heavy debts, that Airlie was almost in the hands of the sheriff, and that his two kinspeople were in poverty.

"Can you tell me what was the amount of my uncle's indebtedness?"

"No, I cannot. I heard it speculated upon ; but it was at most only guesswork."

"Do you know whether my uncle became involved suddenly, or whether it was the result of letting things slip away from him?"

"The latter, I fancy."

"One more thing, Mr. Standish ; there is no stain attached to my uncle's name, is there?" and Dick scrutinized him anxiously.

"None that I ever heard of." He paused a moment, then went on : "You must pardon me, Mr. Elgar, if I tell you one thing which may throw light upon the tangled condition of affairs at Airlie ; your uncle had been for several years before his death a hard drinker."

"Ah!" Dick threw himself back in his chair. His mind flew back over the years, till it brought him to the day when he and his uncle leaned on the fence, looking

at the wheat, and his uncle had told him he "had lost his grip," and had lamented having no son to take things in hand at Airlie. He remembered distinctly his own boyish reply, "All that I am, and all that I have are yours," and as he recalled it a glow of shame rose to his cheek when he thought how empty an offer it had been; how selfish he had been and how indifferent to the fate of his kinsfolk. It was small comfort to him to think that he might still have it in his power to help them.

The silence between the two men lasted some time. Standish blew light circling rings of smoke from his cigar, as he watched the gradually darkening face of his companion, who was evidently filled with uncomfortable thoughts and was facing a painful situation. At last, with a profound sigh, Dick aroused himself and said:

"I fear I have bored you, Mr. Standish, with my many questions; and painful as your revelations have been to me, I am deeply indebted to you."

"Don't mention it," replied Standish. After a pause, he said: "Airlie is a beautiful old place, but so is your own place, Ivanwold."

"Ah! you have been there? I do not care much for the place; I never had any very happy associations with it. But may I ask if you know what caused my aunt's ill-health?"

"I am afraid I cannot help you there; I never happened to hear, and the only time I ever met her Miss Elgar was wheeling her in a chair."

"And my cousin, Miss Elgar, you say, is beautiful?"

"Yes, she is a beautiful woman." Then Standish proceeded to tell Dick of the first time he had met his cousin. He gave a slight sketch of the Estens, and of the people that had been there that night. He mentioned Jared Comly among the rest.

"Comly? who is Comly? you mentioned him, I believe, as being with my cousin the night her father was found in the snow?"

"Comly lives at Airlie, and works there as half-overseer, half-laborer, I believe."

"When do you return to America, Mr. Standish?" asked Dick abruptly.

"I expect to be in London the 1st of June, and shall sail almost immediately."

"I will meet you in London and sail with you," was the unexpected announcement.

"Good; I wish you could go to Switzerland with me."

"I cannot; I must get my work off my hands. I have several lectures yet to give, and a paper or two to finish."

Standish rose. The night was getting late. It was evident from the quietness that reigned in the Ritter that the house was asleep. Dick accompanied him to his rooms at the top of the house; where the two men, who had been utter strangers only a few hours before, shook hands warmly and parted friends, with many assurances of meeting on the morrow.

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK SHAPES HIS COURSE.

DICK returned to his rooms. He walked to his desk, turned up the lamp, abstractedly picked up a sheet of the manuscript which lay there, glanced over it without understanding a word of what was before his eyes, laid it down again, threw himself into the arm-chair and gave himself up to the crowding thoughts which had taken possession of him since Standish had made the revelations concerning his cousins and the sad changes that had taken place. He had been shocked to hear of his uncle's death at the time he first heard the news, but he had been so sure that aunt and cousin were amply provided for that he had never for a moment felt any concern for them financially. He had always known his uncle as a rich man, rich, that is, for the country. He had been telling himself for several months that he ought to return to America and look after things, for it had lain heavily upon his mind that he was the only male relative left his aunt and cousin. But his absorbing work had always crowded out

thoughts of home, and he had put off the time of going.

What he had heard to-night was so terrible that he felt he must go to their aid at once. He could not prevent a feeling of bitterness in his heart that they should not have turned to him in their distress. Surely his aunt, whom next to his own mother he had best loved, ought to have written to him and told him their situation ; but it was with a pang that he remembered how long he had left unanswered her last letter, with its sweet, old-fashioned expressions of interest and advice. She had never written again. Then he thought of Deborah ; surely she might have told him in what straits his uncle's death had left them. Perhaps she had told him, and it had been in one of the forwarded letters which he had never received. If so, they were none the wiser, and must be thinking him selfish and heartless. Then he thought of Robin, his brave little cousin, as he still thought of her, laboring in the fields like the German women, one of whom he had seen recently harnessed to a cart, and when he had spoken to her, she had told him cheerfully that her spouse had gone to the fair. Perhaps his cousin was drudging, just as the peasant women of Germany do. The thought was intolerable to him. What could they be thinking of in the old home to allow her to do it ?

Then he recalled Standish's glowing tribute to Robin ; in fact, he remembered that Standish had shown a de-

cided tendency to speak frequently of her, and each time with enthusiasm : her beauty, her sweetness, her attainments, her pluck—all had been dwelt upon. Was it possible that Standish was in love with his cousin? He would watch him, sound him, inquire about him when he reached America, and if he should prove honorable and had any prospects in life, why, Dick said to himself, it might be a good thing for little Robin. But he remembered there had been another man spoken of, Comly, who was living at Airlie, who had been with his cousin the night his uncle had been found. What on earth was Comly, or any man, living at Airlie for? He wondered if he could be one of the Comlys who had lived in Fenny Drayton when he was a boy. He remembered one of them had been worthless and had run away from home. The whole family were good, plain Friends, but not quite on a social level with Airlie ; it would never do for Robin to form an attachment of that sort. And he wondered that his aunt would take into her home any one that his uncle and himself might perhaps disapprove of. This idea of Comly was a tormenting one to Dick. It came back to him again and again, taking a new shape each time. Perhaps Robin, through sheer propinquity, was already betrothed to him, or at least fancied herself in love with him. Of course, if Comly was living with them as a laborer, or at best as overseer, he was poor, and with Airlie encumbered he saw in such an alliance only life-long drudgery and unhappiness for his cousin, whom he

must protect if it were not already too late. Clearly, he thought to himself as he rose from his chair, when the night was more than half spent : " I will go home, take charge of things at Airrie, pay off the mortgage, get rid of Comly, put things ship-shape, and then, if I see Standish proves a possible lover, I will take him into consideration. He 's not half bad as my countrymen go."

Having disposed of things to his own satisfaction, and glad that he had settled in his mind upon his plan of action, Dick turned in for the night—to dream that two soft, childish arms were clasped tightly about his neck, and a pathetic little voice was saying tremulously : " I shall be most as big a man as thee when thee comes back, Dick." Then the scene shifted to a ploughed field, with a wild young horse tearing madly across the damp, uneven furrows, and himself dragging at the end of a long rope. Then again he seemed to see coming towards him a shabby little cart loaded with herbs, and a young ragged girl half-dragging it, half-hitched to it ; and as she turned her imploring eyes upon him, he saw the childish face of his cousin. He waked with cold perspiration standing out upon his forehead, to find that it was only a horrible dream ; that the bright April sun was shining outside, and that the morning was already late.

It was not long before the two men were breakfasting together, quite like old, familiar friends. Standish agreed to stay in Heidelberg a little longer than his original intention had been, Dick being anxious to do the honors

of the town in which he had spent so much of his time since living abroad. He urged Standish to visit some of the picturesque places that lay all about Heidelberg, scattered among the hills which lined the Neckar valley. It was decided that after seeing the town more thoroughly they should take in Speyer, Eberbach, and perhaps Mosbach. As soon as breakfast was finished the two men strolled out of the Ritter, turning their steps to the Ludwig's Platz, where the University buildings stand. Dick proceeded to take his new friend through the old Ruperto-Carola, giving in a few brief words a slight sketch of the famous cradle of science of South Germany. As they walked along, Standish was more and more impressed by the distinguished appearance of his companion and the amount of knowledge he seemed to possess upon all points. He wondered to himself what special branch of science his companion was interested in ; for, save the allusion to lectures and scientific papers, no other word had escaped him. It was evident he was connected in some way with the University, for they encountered students and professors in abundance, many of whom, from the deference of their greetings, evidently held him in high esteem and as a person of consideration.

In the course of their wanderings from one building to another Dick said : "I should like to have you take a glimpse in here for a moment" ; and stepping into a dreary building near at hand, they entered a large bare hall, with green garlands hanging in festoons from the

ceiling. There were forty or fifty students present in the hall, all of them wearing queer little caps of various brilliant colors, tipped over their eyes. They were all intent upon two central figures who were cutting and slashing at each other with long swords. It flashed over Standish that the Heidelberg students were famous swordsmen, and that they constantly met the members of the different corps in *schlager* combat. This, he thought, might account for his companion's long scar. As he bent his eyes upon him inquiringly, Dick caught the glance. He smiled, touched the scar on his cheek, and said in an undertone: "Yes, it was done with a *schlager* in my early student days, and in just such a place as this." As they stood looking on at what to Standish seemed a most ridiculous and brutal exhibition, Dick said:

"You see, the students are divided into corps, each corps being distinguished by a certain-colored cap. Any man joining a corps is expected to challenge a man of another corps. They meet and fight in the presence of other members, until one of them receives a bad cut. Every man in every corps is expected to fight six or eight times in this way; if he does not he is branded as cowardly. Do not imagine that they are fighting out a feud or some difference they have had. They fight with these *schlagers* in the same spirit that college students in America play foot-ball or base-ball, or pit one crew against another in a regatta. As you

see, they do not fence ; it is really rough sword-thrusting. The eyes are protected as you observe with wire goggles, and the vital parts of the body are safely padded. It is a queer custom, without rhyme or reason, but as old as the University itself."

"And you fought just as we now see these two young men doing?"

"Certainly," said Dick ; "what's more," he added, "I fear at the time I enjoyed it." They did not remain very long, nor see the termination of the combat. After they went, Dick said :

"The scientific collections and other institutions, Mr. Standish, are in the Friedrichsbau, which you probably saw yesterday at the Schloss."

"To tell the truth, I only had time to walk through the Schloss in a very superficial way. I saw nothing really but the magnificent view of the town and the Neckar."

"You did not see the Gesprenkte Thurm then?" Dick asked, with a slight disappointment in his tone.

"I presume not, but the German names are so confoundingly hard that I find I do not recognize them when I hear them properly pronounced. Do you mean Blown-up Tower?"

"Yes. In the side of the moat, just near where the tower lies, there is a curious combination of red sandstone and granite which is of the deepest interest and importance, geologically considered."

"I should like to go through the Schloss with you for cicerone. Have you the time to spare?"

"Most certainly," replied Dick.

The two turned toward the castle, deciding to lunch later at the Molkencur, which stands high above the Schloss. As they walked along Dick talked delightfully. He gave little sketches of the people in and about the picturesque old town; he told of some of the queer customs among the students; he related odd experiences of his own during his travels; and Standish each moment was more and more compelled to admire his companion. He felt that here was a man who knew the world thoroughly without being a cynic; was learned without being a prig, and was fine-looking and distinguished without seeming to be conscious of it. The resemblance to the far-away Maryland cousin, which had been so strong at first, was gradually fading, and the more he saw of him the less pronounced did it appear, until finally the only thing that reminded him of her was a certain fearlessness of glance and gesture.

Meanwhile Dick was quietly and unobtrusively studying his countryman, noting all that he said and all that he did, with a view to finding out if possible what sort of a man he was, what his instincts were, and what sort of a fellow he would be for little Robin to marry. He confessed himself a little puzzled. He was afraid Standish was rather a light-weight, but under his seeming indifference and indolence there might be considerable manliness; he was evidently a gentleman.

Thus each man, unconscious that he was an object of any special scrutiny from the other, pursued his own line of thought, while keeping up an unbroken flow of talk. They had long since reached the Schloss and examined one thing of interest after another. At last they found themselves in the wonderful Blown-up Tower. After gazing down upon the half of the ruin that lay in the moat, Dick proposed that they should descend and inspect from a near point the curious geological problem that was visible below, and of which he had spoken a little while before. Dick pointed it out and began a rapid and glowing dissertation upon the strange combination. Standish felt that he had at last come upon his companion's hobby. He said :

"Ah ! you are a mineralogist."

"Yes, to a certain extent. Geology, however, is the special object of my work, but the two are of course inseparable."

"To be a geologist, then, you must be a mineralogist ? And how many other sciences must a man combine with it ?"

Dick laughed lightly at the tone of his companion.

"Oh, well, naturally, to know any thing of the constituents of rocks one must know something of mineralogy ; and a knowledge of the laws of change depends upon chemistry and physics ; while of course the study of fossil remains is closely allied with zoölogy and botany. Any one of these sciences involves more or less the study of them all."

"Jove, it must be a grind on a man to acquire it all."

"Oh, no ; I owe my taste for science to my father. I can remember, when I was only a little fellow, of following him all about our old farm in Maryland. He had collected all sorts of queer things, queer to me at least as a boy : arrow-heads which had been turned up in the ploughing, and several rudely cut stone bowls, bits of queer pebbles, together with dried plants and the like. He was a bit of a botanist, geologist and mineralogist, and he would explain his treasures to me by the hour." Dick sighed as he recalled how that same cherished collection of weeds and stones had mysteriously disappeared in the general upturning when The Meadows became Ivanwold. After a slight pause he continued : "After my father's death, which occurred when I was about ten years old, I remember I made a collection of stones, bits of rocks and pressed flowers, all upon my own responsibility."

"How did you happen to pitch your tent here in Germany?" Standish asked.

"After graduating at Harvard, I came here to enter upon a course of study under Rosenbusch, and I have remained in Heidelberg off and on ever since, studying and lecturing. There is a most delightful and learned coterie of German scientific men to be met here, and I have remained year after year, going away of course for periods of travel and research."

The two men were silent for a few moments. Then Standish asked :

"Were you in earnest last night about returning to America?"

"Most assuredly. I have delayed already too long returning to my old home; and I feel that after the revelations you made last night, my cousins must be my first thought and care until I can straighten out their affairs. I never had any thing come upon me with such a shock, and I would not be half a man if I delayed longer in returning and taking the helm."

His companion could not help fancying that he was counting upon rather an unknown quantity when he spoke so positively about taking the helm; he felt sure that he would find a strong hand at the helm already, but it was none of his business, he told himself.

The day passed rapidly, and several more besides. Standish found that, instead of staying only twenty-four hours in Heidelberg, he had spent five days there. At the end of them he was ready to resume his journey; and one bright morning the two new friends, thrown together by chance, were to be seen walking to the station, conversing rapidly and eagerly. A few moments before the train moved off, Dick said earnestly:

"You will secure passage for me with your own at Liverpool? Wire me as soon as it is done, the day and the steamer. Any plan or arrangement you make will be satisfactory to me. Give me three days' notice and I will be there."

"You may depend upon me," his companion rejoined. And with a warm clasp of hands they parted.

Six weeks later, upon a warm day in early June, all was bustle and confusion at the dock of one of the great steamship lines at Liverpool. The hours before sailing had dragged slowly by ; chaos was gradually subsiding, and Standish was beginning to be nervous at the non-arrival of his travelling companion. At almost the last moment, a cab rattled down to the dock. Dick jumped out hurriedly, looked up his boxes which had preceded him, and soon he and Standish were standing on deck watching the receding land. Standish looked curiously at his newly-arrived friend, and could not refrain from saying :

“What have you done to yourself, Elgar ? You look different, somehow.”

“Well, I have become more civilized for one thing ; I’ve taken off my German beard. And I’ve shaken off the musty, prosy air of the professor. By Jove, I feel like a boy off on a holiday ; I have n’t felt as young in years.”

He turned his face hopefully towards the west. The ship pulled slowly out to sea ; the land became a dim, uncertain line against the horizon, till it was swallowed up in the boundless ocean.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE "HORTICULTURAL."

THE old farm was flaunting its best and richest raiment in the warm June sunshine. The soft flakes of locust-bloom were gently wafted from the far-away clusters upon the tree-tops, and lay scattered upon the fresh green bosom of the lane, there to vie in sweetness with the tall Indian grass which scented every passing breeze; and all nature, as if in love with her own charms, seemed to pause before plunging into the arid heat of summer. The whole place wore an unusually festive look, as if it, too, were basking in the gala June day, before the toil and hurry of harvest drew on. It was evident that preparations for some gathering were in progress. A row of tables on the lawn, just under the sitting-room windows, was laden with specimens of various vegetables and fruits, each carefully labelled with the name of the farm from which it had been sent in the early morning; while apart from the vegetables, upon a long, narrow table, were ranged all manner of bowls and glasses containing a wilderness of every

flower known to a country garden that the month of June could produce. Inside every thing wore a "company look." The sitting-room was at its best, with feathery asparagus, freshly cut, filling in the fire-place. Up in Dorothea's own room, the best fringed spread spotlessly covered the high four-posted bed with its dimity hangings. Every thing was in its accustomed place, from the old-time print of Elizabeth Fry talking to the women in the prison at Newgate, to the pins stuck in precise order upon the drab cushion. In the dining-room the mahogany table was polished till it reflected the dishes upon it; for, after the fashion of Maryland tea-tables, it had no cloth, but spotless napkins were spread under each plate. It was evident that a large company was expected. Dorothea was on the porch, in a fine taffeta gown, with folded kerchief, ready and waiting to extend her old-time, cordial greeting to the comers.

It was to be a meeting of the "Horticultural," and was the first gathering of any kind that had been held at Airlie since Gilbert's death. Dorothea was anxious, on her daughter's account, that the old-time hospitality should be resumed. She felt that Robin was falling out of the habits of the neighborhood, that she had excluded herself from the many gatherings far too much; so, as a personal favor, she had asked the society to meet once more at Airlie. Robin came through the hall and out to the porch, her light, firm step bringing a smile to Doro-

thea's face. She was dressed in a mull gown of white, with no color relieving its extreme simplicity. The soft surplice waist crossed upon her bosom and the full folds of the drapery upon the skirt falling about her tall, symmetrical figure clothed her most fittingly. Her hair, drawn back rather more than usual, left exposed a line of white forehead which contrasted dazzlingly with the sunburn and tan which spread over the rest of the face, through which shone the ruddy color of perfect health. Dorothea gazed fondly and admiringly at her, and said :

"Thee looks to-day as I like to see thee look, Robin. I wish thee would wear pretty things oftener, and dress more like Harmony."

"Harmony's style would not suit a dairy-maid ; and surely, mother, thee would not like to see me in a bunched-up gown on the reaper?" Dorothea sighed without replying. Robin continued : "I ought never to wear white, I am so tanned, mother." She stretched out her hand, as brown as a berry, and laid it beside the white frail hands of her mother.

"I never see the tan, Robin, when I think of all thy hands have done ; they are good and honest" ; and she stroked them gently.

Robin smiled as she thought of Harmony's delicate hands covered with rings, and then of her own, which were brown, firm and ringless.

Deborah now appeared, her cotton gown turned and pinned up at the back, displaying a pair of sturdy feet

and ankles. An old sun-bonnet shaded her face, while her arms were full of odds and ends she had picked up on her way through the house from the garden. In one hand she held a monster beet she had evidently just rooted up from the ground.

"See what a beauty, Robin; I'm going to put it where it will be seen."

"But, Cousin Deb, it is half-past three, and thee is not dressed."

"It won't take me two minutes to slip into my old delaine." She put her prize beet in the most prominent place on one of the tables, then tramped into the house.

The carriages began to arrive and deposit their loads. Some of the older Friends came armed with cap-baskets, which, besides the cap, contained a bit of knitting or crocheting. After the feminine portion of the arrivals had shaken out the folds of their simple gowns, or adjusted the bands of velvet which held the hair in place under the plain caps, they descended to inspect the specimen vegetables and flowers gathered on the tables; thence they went to the garden, to judge of the young owner's skill and success in gardening. One by one they drifted back to the house, to the sitting-room where the meeting was to be held; and soon it was crowded to its uttermost capacity; only a few of the younger men, among whom were Jared and Thaddy, remained in the hall, or on the porch. The president

of the Horticultural, Abel Wharton, a tall, distinguished man, who was quite the foremost man among the Friends, rose and called the meeting to order :

"Before proceeding to our regular business, I would like to say on behalf of the Horticultural that it is a great pleasure for us to be assembled once more at Airlie, and that we welcome the return of Friend Elgar to our midst. Further, we cannot too highly commend the young farmer, who by her skill and hard work has done so much already, and who bids fair to make her farm one of the model places of our neighborhood. I am sure that no one among us to-day has a better offering of flowers and vegetables than Robin Elgar."

There was a slight pause ; then he continued in a brisk, business-like tone :

"The Secretary will now read the minutes of the last meeting." This being done, the first paper of the afternoon, taken from Henderson's "Gardening for Profit," was read, after which followed a discussion of the best methods of planting out various vegetables and flowers, while crochet- and knitting-needles flew in and out, keeping time to the sound of the voices. The time for discussion and the business hour passed, then the second and last paper of the afternoon was called for. This paper was generally more of a literary effort than the preceding one, and was more in the nature of an essay. Though it always had some bearing upon the object of the meeting, it was allowed a wider range, and any thing

original or new was acceptable. Abel Wharton looked about among the different members present for the reader of the second paper, but no one responded as he called her name. At last he asked :

“Is not Hadassah Comly present this afternoon? She was the appointed essayist.”

“Hadassah did not come,” responded Jared from the doorway. Hadassah was his brother’s wife.

“Does thee know whether she sent her paper?”

“I think she did not send it,” he responded once more.

No one could give any reason for her absence, or knew any thing of the essay. The President then looked about him.

“Will any one volunteer any thing in Hadassah’s place? Miss Harmony, cannot you tell us something interesting? No?” as Harmony shook her head. “Jared, will thee? No? Perhaps Thaddeus Watkins will volunteer something?” But Thaddy quickly disappeared from behind Jared in the doorway, where he had been standing, while a broad smile went round the room.

“Edward Granville, will thee speak? No? Why this is terrible; all this roomful, and no one with an idea. Come, Evan Massie, thee can surely teach us something?”

“Thee’d better not call on me for a homily on gardening. I do not know a leek from an onion,” replied Evan.

"I will make a last appeal : Robin Elgar, thee 's a gardener ; can thee help us out ? If thee can think of nothing else, tell us what thee knows about leeks."

Robin flushed, then smiled, and said hesitatingly :

"I know nothing really about leeks, but the other day I came across something odd, apropos of them. It seems that during the reign of Charlemagne his subjects had given so much more attention and time to the art of war than to the tillage of the soil, that agriculture was absolutely at a standstill. The Emperor, knowing what terrible disaster would overtake a people that did not raise crops and vegetables, ordered every householder in his kingdom to make a garden, and even gave them a list of plants that were to be raised. Among them he particularly commanded that leeks should be planted on every house-top. The result of this edict was that the range of many herbs was widely extended geographically. And I believe Plutarch says that the ancient Greeks invariably planted roses and violets among their onions and leeks." She stopped.

"Go on," said several.

"That is all I know about leeks," she replied quietly.

Everybody continued to look at her expectantly and interestedly. After a moment of utter silence, with evident hesitancy, she began again, in a low, clear voice, as if she were repeating from memory or reading from some book ;

"When, in the new-born spring, from the snow-clad mountains the
water

Flows ice-cold, and the soil to the west wind crumbling unloosens,
Even then let my steer 'neath the plough deep-driven his groaning
Begin, and the ploughshare rubbed by the furrow begin its gleaming.

"That field, at least, to the hopes of the greedy farmer will answer,
Which twice hath the warmth of the sun and twice the cold winter
experienced ;

The plentiful crops of such the store-houses oft fill to bursting.

"But before a soil until now unknown we cut with the ploughshare,
Let us take care to learn the winds and the sky with its changing ;
The preceding methods of culture, the inherited nature of country,
And what each region may bear and to what each refuses a welcome."

She paused. The whole room was silent : crochet- and knitting-needles stopped ; each ear was taking in the deep, clear tones of the voice, each eye was fixed upon the face of the speaker. Two at least of all the room, Abel Wharton and Evan Massie, knew from what she was reciting ; Evan knew that she was making her own blank-verse translation. He followed her step by step, and when she paused both men cried simultaneously : "Go on." She continued, and passed from one glowing tribute to another : the ploughing and preparing of the soil, the effect of climate, the grain, the vines, the trees, the cattle and the bees. She gave faithfully line after line of that most unique poetic eulogy of agriculture, the *Georgics*. Evan remembered, with a glow on his face, when she first read Virgil ; he remembered how she followed the fortunes and wanderings of Æneas with avidity, but had turned afterwards with reluctance to the

Georgics, complaining that they were dull. It was evident that with her experiences of the last year and her maturer taste, she had turned again to Virgil, to find that in the childishly-despised Georgics the poet had pictured the tillage of the soil in such exalted poetic strains as to enchain her mind.

There was silence for a moment or two when she ceased to speak ; then she was warmly thanked by Abel Wharton for her appropriate and impromptu recitation, and the meeting adjourned. Evan made his way quickly to her, and said :

"Thee has been re-reading Virgil I see. Does thee remember thy verdict years ago upon the Georgics ?"

"Do not remind me of my childish opinion. I was too young for such reading, Evan ; but I thank thee for it, all the same. I re-read the Georgics this past winter. The parts I quoted particularly pleased me and remained in my memory."

"I was proud of thee, child ; thy recitation was most opportune."

"Come, Robin, it's supper-time, and we've got to feed all these people. Where is Jared ?" This was Deborah, who was bustling about, carrying the chairs from the sitting-room to the dining-room. "Here, Evan, thee carry these two chairs" ; and seeing Thaddy she called out, "Come here, Thad Watkins, and make yourself useful."

As Thaddy came up to them, he armed himself with a couple of chairs and said, as he passed Robin :

"Miss Rob, I'm dlad you were able to say somethin' this af'noon. By Gup, I mos' fell down when Mr. Wharton spoke out my name ; I jus' lit out."

"Well, suppose you 'light out' with those chairs," said Deborah sharply.

"'Deed, Miss Deb, I won'er why you 're so hard on a fella. I'm goin' as fas' as I can"; and he hustled away to the dining-room in perfect good-nature.

The big supper was soon in progress ; and before the last rays of the sun gathered into an after-glow it was over. The Friends began to depart, and the last carriage drove down the lane just as the lumbering, red stage rattled past the gate through the village, and Airlie was left in quiet. Robin and Deborah gathered up the remains of supper, and put away the best china ; the chairs were all set back in their usual places, the sitting-room made orderly and trim, and then the two came out on the porch and joined Dorothea.

"Oh, dear me," exclaimed Deborah, gazing despairingly at the tables of vegetables and flowers on the lawn : "What is to be done with all this truck, I'd like to know? Can't it stay where it is for to-night?" she asked of Dorothea.

"Why, yes ; I do not believe any one will touch it."

"Well, as long as 'taint chickens I guess it's all safe from the darkies. Robin and I are too tired to put it away to-night."

They sat upon the darkening porch to talk over

the afternoon. Presently Jared came from the village. He went to the window-sill where Gilbert used to keep his pipe and tobacco. As he filled his pipe he said :

"By the way, Cousin Deborah, Phil Rush, Friend Rush's son thee knows, came up in the stage to-night. He asked if thee were here, and said a stranger came in the stage with him as far as Ivanwold, where he got out, bag and baggage."

"Humph ! did he say what sort of looking man he was ?"

"Big man, with blond hair and moustache."

"Big man with blond hair and moustache ? Let me see, I don't know any one of that description."

"If thee feels uneasy I will drive thee to Ivanwold."

"Pooh ! it's some one of those agents. Every summer I am tormented by some one who comes along and says he hears the place is for sale. I don't care a button for all the agents alive ; let him take care of himself." She asked presently : "But why did Phil Rush want to know if I were here ?"

"He said the stranger asked him if thee were at Ivanwold or away on a visit. Phil remembered, it seems, that the Horticultural would meet here this afternoon, and that thee would probably be here for the night."

"Well, I 'll go home bright and early in the morning, but I don't mean to stir a step to-night."

Just then Robin rose to go into the house ; as she did so she said :

"Jared, does thee know where the key of the smoke-house is? It is not hanging on the nail in the inner kitchen."

"I saw it hanging in the smoke-house door this morning; I will go and see if it is there."

"No, thee need not; I will go."

She went quickly through the house, down the steps of the high kitchen porch, and out towards the smoke-house, just as Jared came round the corner of the house on the same errand. They reached the spot together. Their hands met awkwardly in the dark upon the latch of the door. The missing key was there. Jared drew back hastily with it in his hand. Robin turned towards the garden and said:

"Don't wait for me, I must see that the turkeys are shut up."

She stepped hurriedly over the grass to where the coop stood just outside the hedge of the garden. Jared strode up in the dark at her side.

"Let me help thee," he said, in such gentle tones that Robin said, hurriedly:

"Thank thee, no," and, turning towards the house, she added: "Good-night."

Jared hurried after her, and said with a note of anger in his voice:

"Why does thee always turn from me? Cannot thee show me even ordinary kindness, when I would give all I possess for some token that I am not the least among thy friends?"

"Jared, I did not mean to be abrupt or unkind, but it is too late to talk out-of-doors ; let us go in."

As she passed him he caught her hand and pressed it to his heart with passionate fervor, then hurried away from her. He walked up and down the garden paths, a fever of impatience in his heart and brain. He muttered to himself :

"It is more than mortal man can endure ; I must get out of this."

After the lights had disappeared from the house, he went back to the porch and lighted his pipe. This seemed to allay the fierce spirit that had possession of him. At last he rose, and as if stern resolve had gained the mastery, he said aloud :

"I must now put it to the touch ; I will tell her like a man I love her, and like a man abide by her decision. Heaven help me if it be against me !"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGER AT AIRLIE.

THE next morning Deborah was up bright and early.

As soon as breakfast was over she climbed into her rockaway and started old John towards Ivanwold, determined to settle the agent and send him about his business, for she felt confident he had made himself comfortable during her absence and would wait till she returned.

It was churning morning, and Robin was ready to go to the dairy as soon as the butter had "come," to print it and get it ready for market. All the long night she had been sleepless and miserable. She felt that the time was at hand when she must face Jared and his unwelcome love, when she must tell him plainly that she did not, could not care for him, and that he must leave Air-lie. But how could she tell him to go? she asked herself. He had been to her mother devoted and faithful; what would Dorothea do without him? where would she herself find any one to take his place? Then she tried to picture, as she snipped off the little squares of muslin

which were to wrap up the pats of butter, what sort of a man would attract her ; what sort of a love would have power to win her. She could see no one in that rôle. She smiled to herself half-proudly, half-amusedly, at the thought that she had never met any one who really embodied her idea of what a man should be. He certainly did not exist in that neighborhood, and she told herself that he did not exist for her at all. She gathered up her butter-cloths with a sigh as she recalled Jared and the interview that might lurk in any hour of the day before her. She entered the house for her hat. Dorothea, hearing her step, called to her :

"Robin, I want to speak to thee ; I'm in the dining-room."

"What is it, mother ?"

Dorothea looked at her anxiously and silently a moment, then asked without preamble or hesitation :

"Jared has told thee of his love for thee ?"

"No, mother, but he will." From the grave, resolute way in which she met her mother's glance Dorothea felt that her fears were confirmed.

"Thee is not inclined towards Jared ?"

"No, mother."

"Will thee tell me why, daughter ? It would make me very peaceful and happy to see thee marry."

"Mother, would thee advise any woman to marry a man whom she did not love ? with whom she would not have a single congenial thought or idea, save upon farming ?"

"That is putting the case too strongly, daughter ; thee and Jared have seemed to have many ideas in common this past winter. Thee must remember thee has had unusual intellectual advantages ; not many men even have had such. I hope I am not going to live to see my daughter set herself above those among whom she has grown up. There are few men better calculated to make a woman happy and to take better care of her than Jared Comly."

"Mother, I do not need a man to take care of me ; I have proved that I can do that for myself."

"Does thee mean that because thee is able to take care of thyself thee will scorn to marry a good man ?"

"No, mother, never that. I think a happy marriage is the most beautiful thing that can come to a woman, and I hope it will come to me," she said, in an almost inaudible voice.

"What does thee expect to have in a man, Robin ?"

"A man with mind, mother ; a man who can enter the world of thought, of idealism, of poetry ; who, though his hands may plough, sow and reap, may yet have a purpose far above them."

"A man of mind, thee says, and where, daughter, will the heart be ?"

"Such a man, if he exists, has a heart, and none other will I have. I would rather live and drudge by myself, with my books as recompense, than marry such a man as Jared, honest and good though he is."

"Alas ! where will thee find thy ideal, daughter ?"

"I shall never find him, mother. He is out in the world where his place is. He is not shut up in this little corner of Maryland."

"I fear me thee will never marry, but I cannot urge thee beyond thy freedom, feeling as thee does ; it would not be right. I have seen for some time that Jared cared for thee, and I thought from his manner he had spoken. Do not hurt him more than thee can help."

"I would spare him all of it, mother, if I could, but he has rushed upon it. I have tried to show him, as much as a woman can, that it would not be acceptable to me ; but Jared is headstrong and would not see. Thee remembers I did not want him to come to Airlie, mother ; I feared this thing long ago."

"Why did thee not give me a hint at first, daughter ? It was my doing, having him here."

"I could not tell thee of what was then only a suspicion ; it would not have been quite fair somehow."

"Poor child ; thee has borne thyself well, and Jared has a heavy load to carry."

"I must go, mother ; it is time I was getting the butter printed. I shall not be able to finish before dinner."

The morning glided by. Dinner passed silently ; each at the table was too full of painful thoughts and anticipations to talk much. After it was over Jared went to see that the machines were in order for the approaching

harvest, and Robin went back to the dairy to finish the butter. Dorothea sat in the shade of the porch, with a favorite book, until the drowsy afternoon lulled her into a nap in her high-backed, cushioned chair. She did not hear the clatter of horses' hoofs on the roadway in the lane, nor see a man in riding-dress dismount, hitch his horse, glance rapidly over house and grounds, then stride towards the porch where he had caught sight of a well-known figure. He came to the edge of the steps, and seeing Dorothea asleep paused, taking in the changes that trouble, sorrow and ill-health had made. He stepped softly up on the porch, but not softly enough. Dorothea opened her eyes and saw the strange, unfamiliar figure standing before her. An instant of confusion and uncertainty ; then making a move to rise to her feet she said quietly :

" Richard, thee has come at last ? "

Dick's arms were around her in an instant ; then she sank back into her chair. Dick bowed his head and covered his face with his hands, to hide the tears which sprang to his eyes for the first time in years.

He was pained and shocked at the wreck his aunt seemed to him to be. He could utter no word. He dropped down upon the bench by the side of her chair, and took one of her thin hands between his, while she continued to gaze at him.

" Richard, thee has really come ? " was all Dorothea could say.

"Yes, Aunt Dorothy, I have really come."

"What brought thee home?"

"You and little Robin."

Dorothea looked doubtingly at him, then smiled sadly. Dick noticed the sad smile and said quickly :

"Aunt Dorothy, I heard of the changes here at Airlie for the first time this past April, and through Henry Standish, whom I met accidentally in Heidelberg. He told me the particulars of uncle's death, and of the incumbrances on the farm. I immediately closed up my work and came home. Why did you never tell me of the debts? You know every thing I have is yours."

"Ah ! Richard thy words do me good. I knew there was a mistake somewhere ; I felt sure thee had not changed toward us. But all through the dreadful weeks of Gilbert's illness I had no heart to write. Afterwards I was ill. Deborah told me she had written and laid the whole condition of affairs before thee. Time went on and we heard nothing from thee ; so——"

"Just as I felt sure ; her letters were the forwarded ones I never received. Never mind, dear aunt, I have not changed, and I am home again to take affairs in hand. Have you kept a place for your boy?" and he looked eagerly into her face as he used to do years before ; though there was little in the bronzed face of the man to remind her of the boy who had been so long away.

"When did thee come, Richard?"

"Last night, in the stage."

"When did thee land?"

"Only on Saturday,"

"Is thee going to stay in thy home now?" Dorothea asked falteringly, as she tightened her hand upon Dick's.

"I am going to stay as long as you or Robin want me," he replied; then he said eagerly: "But where is my little cousin, my little playfellow, who was so anxious to grow up a man; did she ever get over that notion, aunt?"

"Never; and, Richard, I suppose thee knows she is farming?"

"Yes." A flush rose to Dick's cheek at the thought.

"I will send for Robin; she went to the dairy after dinner," said Dorothea.

"Never mind, I will go in search of her. I am anxious to see if she will know me again. Am I much changed?"

"Yes, I doubt if Robin will know thee at all."

"You knew me, aunt."

"Yes, but Robin was a mere child when thee went away, and thee comes back much bronzed and with a different look about thee." Dick rose, saying:

"I will go in search of her"; and he turned toward the well remembered dairy-field. Dorothea called after him:

"Don't be long away, Richard."

Dick swung open the gate and tramped down the

familiar zigzag path. He was surprised to find how much he was moved at the idea of seeing his little play-fellow again. When he got to the bottom of the meadow, and had stepped over the little stream which separated him from the dairy, he paused a moment hesitatingly ; then opened the gate. Milk-pans and buckets stood all about on the damp bricks. A row of stone crocks was turned down to drain, while the spring which flowed through the cemented dairy-troughs fell over the stones just outside with a soothing, murmuring sound.

The click of the gate brought Robin from the cool, half-darkened stone building. Her eyes fell upon the stranger, standing hat in hand just within the gate. She looked surprised ; then a slight flush rose to her face, as he did not speak nor make himself known. Dick stood motionless, gazing at the tall, grave girl who confronted him. Was this his little cousin who had thrown her arms about his neck and clung to him when he went away years ago ? he asked himself ; and his eyes took in the soft hair, with the little ripples on the temples, the deep eyes looking straight into his own, with a half-haughty, half-inquiring expression in them. The awkward pause was broken at last. She stepped forward and said simply :

“ I am Miss Elgar ; were you in search of me ? ”

“ No, I am not looking for Miss Elgar ; I am looking for my little cousin Robin, whom I came from Germany to find, but she is not here.”

"Your little cousin Robin?" she repeated falteringly; then, coming a step nearer, she exclaimed: "Who, then, are you?" and before he could reply she hurried forward, with outstretched hands and a radiant face of welcome: "It is Dick!"

Dick took her hands and held them, then suddenly bent his head and softly touched her cheek with his lips. The caress, light though it was, sent the hot color surging over his face; he felt that he had perhaps transcended the privilege of a cousin, and glanced hurriedly into her face, but it was as unconscious as a child's, and was turned to his with joy and excitement beaming in every lineament. She still held his hands and said eagerly and rapidly: "Oh, Dick! is it thee, really? When did thee come? has thee seen mother? is thee going to stay? Oh, Kane!" she called out, as she caught sight of Kane coming slowly down the hill toward them, "see, here 's Mr. Dick come home."

Dick turned and saw the crippled form dragging itself toward them. Here was a terrible change, he said to himself. He shook Kane's hand heartily.

"'Deed, Mr. Dick, we mos' thought you 'd clean done forgot us. We 's right glad to have you home again."

"And I was never so glad in my life as I am to be home again, Kane," Dick said.

"Kane, you finish here, I 'll go with Mr. Dick to the house." She picked up her hat from the table in the

dairy. Dick held the gate open for her, and they went up the path to the house.

"Am I so changed, Robin, after all?"

"Yes, the moustache and the scar on thy cheek alter thee very much"; and she glanced inquiringly at it, then went on: "But thy hair and eyes are the same; I'd have known thy eyes anywhere."

"But you did not, all the same; you gazed as haughtily into them as you could. As for you, my little cousin," and Dick turned towards her, as if he were going to put into words the sudden thrill of admiration her beauty and unconsciousness had evoked; but when he met her face, turned to him as if she expected to hear merely that she had grown, he checked the flattering words and said: "Well, my little cousin has grown out of my recollection. I left her a little girl, and I find her a very much grown-up young woman. Do you remember you said you would be almost as big a man as I when I got back?"

"Yes, Dick, and I am," she said smilingly, as she drew herself up to her full height and swept her eyes over the old home, the fields of waving grain and the cattle standing in the shade of the trees in the dairy meadow: all hers, and saved from the hands of the sheriff by her own exertions. It flashed through her mind that she had perhaps, in her way, done as much in the world as Dick himself, and she glanced furtively at him, taking in the faultless dress, the distinguished bearing of the man at

her side. A feeling began to creep over her before they reached the upper gate, that this was a new Dick ; not the reckless, daring cousin of old, around whom her childish fancies had clung, but a man with an atmosphere of strangeness about him, an air of reserve and power, of culture, an indefinable something that belonged to a world of which she had no knowledge. There was a slight reaction from the joy she had experienced when she first recognized and greeted her cousin. She said to herself with an inward sigh : "It is not Dick, but a stranger."

When they reached the porch, and she saw the delight and pride upon her mother's face, her undefined sense of disappointment was swallowed up and lost sight of for the time. Dick seated himself at his aunt's side upon the bench, and said gayly :

"Neither of us knew the other, Aunt Dorothy. I cannot believe this is the same Robin who sat on the fence and saw Comanche Dick throw me."

"Oh, Dick ! Comanche is in the stable now."

"You must take me to see him, Robin," Dick said.

"That reminds me," said Dorothea, "Deborah went away from here this morning, fully persuaded that an agent had arrived at Ivanwold last night, and she was going to get rid of him in great speed. What did she do when she saw who her supposed agent was, Richard ?"

"Cousin Deborah's face was a study when she finally knew me ; but like you, aunt, she is not reconciled to my

appearance. She says I look like a foreigner. What can I do to convince her I am still an American?" asked Dick. But Dorothea interposed:

"Richard, I hear thee has become a distinguished scientific man."

"Far from distinguished, aunt, but I am interested in science, heart and soul."

Then followed a brief sketch of his work, of the German university town where he had lived, of his travels and expeditions. His enthusiasm of voice and manner showed the love of the scholar for his work, and his observations showed that he was something of a philosopher. Dorothea was pleased with his manner, which was a mixture of the elaborate politeness of the Germans of the upper class and the old-fashioned courtesy of her own early days.

"We shall be proud of thee, my boy; indeed I am proud of thee now," she said as she glanced fondly at him.

Dick at last brought the conversation round to his uncle's death. The daughter slipped away, leaving her mother to recount, in her tender way, the sorrows and changes of the past few years. Robin gave a few moments' attention to the tea-table, gathered a few special flowers with which to deck it in honor of Dick's presence, then she changed her print gown of the morning for the mull gown her mother had admired the day before. As she appeared again in the doorway, Dick rose quickly to his feet and placed a chair for her. Something in the

action arrested her attention. It was not by any means more than other men in the neighborhood were in the habit of doing, but there was a queer, elaborate formality about it which was unusual, but which seemed perfectly natural to her cousin. She thought to herself : " How much manner Dick has ; he is quite unlike any man I ever saw before ; decidedly foreign. I wonder what Harmony will think of him ? "

Just then Jared rode round from the stable in his shirt-sleeves. Knowing of no visitors, he crossed the grass on his horse and leisurely approached the railing of the porch. When, too late, he discovered the presence of a stranger, a dark frown gathered upon his face, as his keen eyes took in with a comprehensive glance the unusual-looking man who was making himself so much at home on the porch. There was a moment of awkward silence, broken finally by Dorothea, who said :

" Richard, let me make thee acquainted with our friend, Jared Comly, who lives with us. Jared, this is our cousin, Richard Elgar, who has just returned home."

Dick stepped forward to the railing, bowing pleasantly and at the same time extending his hand. Jared, with a decided scowl on his face, merely lifted his straw hat, with the slightest possible bend of the head ; then turning in his saddle said to Robin abruptly :

" I 've just found out that something about the reaper is out of order. One of the levers will not work ; I must ride to Airlie about it. We may not be able to

begin the wheat to-morrow till noon, but it won't matter much."

"I do not agree with thee about it not mattering. If we can possibly begin in the morning, I think it will be best."

"Well, we can't begin reaping with a broken machine, no matter how long we have to wait," he curtly returned. With a half nod over his shoulder to Dick, he cantered over the grass. Robin called to him :

"Jared, please tell Bill to take Mr. Elgar's horse and put it up."

Something in the tone or something in the order sent the dark blood to Jared's cheek. Without turning his head, he rode straight past the rack where the horse stood and clattered down the roadway. Dick glanced swiftly at his cousin, who stood watching the retreating horseman with an indignant light in her eyes. He said to himself :

"Comly is a brute, and she knows it. Luckily I am not too late." Then he said to his cousin lightly : "It is not worth while to put up the horse ; I am going to Ivanwold very soon."

"No, Richard, thee must stay overnight with us ; I cannot let thee go so soon," said Dorothea.

"I must go back to-night after tea, dear aunt, but I shall be here early in the morning. In fact, I am going to be here every morning, if you will let me," he said, addressing his aunt, but looking his cousin in the eyes.

"Of course, Dick," Robin replied frankly to his questioning eyes. Dorothea then asked, in a troubled tone :

"Will Jared be back to tea, does thee think, daughter?"

"I do not know, mother ; I presume not." She smiled faintly to herself as she recognized another of Jared's moods, and fancied that the presence of her cousin was the immediate cause. She was mortified that he should have shown Dick such scant courtesy, and felt sure that Dick would set it down to country boorishness. And there suddenly sprang up in her heart a desire that her cousin should think well of them at Airlie, that he should stay among them. And yet how could she expect a man of his experience, his travel and culture, to put up with a quiet country neighborhood where the Farmers' Club and the Horticultural Meetings were the social features, varied now and then by lectures or readings at the Lyceum? or, when in a special whirl of gayety, a sociable or a fox-hunt was considered the extreme of dissipation? Dick would stand it as long as he could, then he would take himself off for good. Arrived at this point in her thoughts she sighed.

"What are you thinking of, my grave cousin?" Dick asked, as he came and leaned on the railing by her side.

"I am wondering, Dick, how thee will ever put up with the dulness, the stupidity of the country, for I assume that thee has come to stay," she said as she looked at him earnestly, almost appealingly. Dick looked gravely at her for a moment, then said slowly in a tone of conviction :

"I have come to stay." There was a slight pause, then he went on : "You cannot conceive, Robin, how beautiful, how exquisite and peaceful this neighborhood seemed to me to-day, as I rode up the familiar road and past the well-known places. I had forgotten it was so beautiful. And although I have only been one short afternoon at Airlie," he added, with a sudden light leaping to his eyes, "I feel that I do not want to leave it again."

"Oh, Dick ! thee does my heart good. I had not known how lonely we were until I heard thee talk with mother this afternoon about dear father " ; and she laid her hand lightly on Dick's arm. Dick quickly laid his hand over hers, and said in a low voice :

"Poor little cousin !"

Then they went off into recollections of childish days ; and with a "Do you remember that day ?" or "Has thee forgotten the afternoon ?" the early twilight fell.

It was late that night when Dick swung himself into his saddle and turned homewards. He started off in a brisk trot, but soon the lines fell upon his horse's neck, and the animal, lending himself to his master's mood, came down to a slow walk. Dick was in a profound reverie. He took no note of houses or trees as they loomed up in the soft summer night. His mind was full of one theme : Robin, little Robin, whom he had thought, in Germany, it might be well for Standish to marry.

CHAPTER XIX.

"PRESSED BEYOND HER FREEDOM."

THE news of Dick's return spread rapidly through the neighborhood, and many startling reports were soon put in circulation concerning him. Thaddy was very industrious in listening to all that was going the rounds and in repeating the same to every one he met. He hurried to The Hatch the second day after Dick's return, full of the gossip concerning the new arrival.

"Miss Harm'ny, have you heard the news!" he called out, as he hitched his horse under a tree on the lawn.

"What news?" she called back from the porch.

"Why, Dick Elgar 's come home."

"Yes, I knew he was coming," she replied, tapping a letter she held in her hand.

"You knew he was comin' an' kep' it to yourself? I 'll bet you a levy I knew it firs'. Who tol' you?" he asked, curiosity shining in every line of his face.

"I cannot tell you," she replied, smiling.

Harmony held a letter from Standish, written upon his arrival in New York, and recounting his meeting with

Dick in Germany ; telling also of the extraordinary revelations he had been obliged to make concerning the Airlie people, and of the sudden resolve upon Elgar's part to accompany him home. And he wound up by announcing his own speedy arrival in the neighborhood, by which time he hoped she would take back her opinion that "Dick Elgar was a selfish brute." This letter had brought a flush of expectation to Harmony's face, but she knew she could not mention to Thaddy that she had had the news from Henry Standish, for Thaddy had a long tongue, and would babble it to every one in the neighborhood.

"Come, now, Miss Harm'ny, who tol' you 'bout Dick Elgar?" Thaddy said, eying the envelope, which was directed in a large, bold hand. Harmony shook her head teasingly.

"Miss Harm'ny, some man 's been writin' you ; I know by the han'," and a jealous pang shot through him. "Hang it all, who is it? I 'll bet it 's Stan'ish. I always thought he was sneakin' roun' here for somethin'."

"Never mind who it is, but tell me, is Mr. Elgar handsome?"

"Don' know ; s'pose women 'd think 'im han'some ; he 's got blue eyes, an' red hair, an' is thun'erin' big," he replied sulkily, still eying the letter.

"Aha ! Mr. Thaddy, you are jealous of the new cousin's good looks. You fear you will be less welcome at Airlie hereafter."

"My goo'ness, Miss Harm'ny, you know Miss Rob won' look at me. I'm not jealous of Elgar, but I'm jealous of that letter you hol' in your han'. An' besides, if I were in love with Miss Rob, her cousin would n' matter, for cousins don' marry among the Frien's."

"But you forget they are only second or third cousins, and it is only first cousins who do not marry."

"Oh, well, I don' wan' to marry Miss Rob; she knows too much. Now when it comes to you, Miss Harm'ny——"

"Thank you, don't mention it," she said, making him a sweeping bow.

"Miss Harm'ny, you don' bluff me off that way. You know I did n' mean any thin', 'cep' I 'm awful gone on you; but you pick a fella' up so sharp."

"You say you are gone? I wish I could believe it," she wickedly said, and laughed as she watched the meaning slowly dawn upon him.

"Oh, now, you 're laughin'. I won'er why women always laugh when I tell 'em——"

"You 're gone on them?" she supplied.

"Hang it all, I 've been sayin' it to you mos' every week for a year, an' I don' seem to make you b'lieve me."

"Oh, yes, I believe you. So did Robin when you told her the same thing a year ago, and so did Janet Wharton when you told her last winter you adored her."

"I say, Miss Harm'ny, you mus' n' think you can craw-fish out of it that way."

"Come, Mr. Watkins, I 'm tired of this conversation ; and besides, you came here for the express purpose of retailing me the news about Robin's cousin, and you have not told me any thing, save that he 's big and has red hair. What an odious description."

"Yes, an' they say he 's come back an awful swell, with queer fo'eign manners."

"I do not believe it," she replied, thinking of all that Standish had told her of Dick, and having full faith in her informant's opinions.

Just then the Captain appeared. "How are you, Watkins?" he said heartily. "I see you have your horse here ; suppose you ride down with me to call upon Richard Elgar—unless you have been?" he inquiringly added.

"All right, I 'd like nothin' better."

"Harmony, my daughter, when did Standish say he would be here? I see you still have his letter."

"Ah, Miss Harm'ny, murder will out. I knew 't was Stan'ish," Thaddy said delightedly, as he noted the annoyance that her face expressed at her father's innocent betrayal.

"Dear me, have I let out any thing that I ought not, Harmony?" the Captain asked anxiously.

"Yes, father, as usual, but never mind. While you are away at Ivanwold, I will drive over to Airlie. Robin was to begin harvesting to-day, but I may catch her for a few moments just about sundown. If I am late getting back ride over for me, father."

"I will, daughter."

Meanwhile the morning of that same day had dawned upon Dick, and found him very impatient and restless. He had determined to go to Airlie and have a long business talk with aunt and cousin, and, if possible, make some arrangement promptly which would prevent Robin from going through the harvest in person. As soon as he had breakfasted Deborah said to him :

"Now, Dick, thee must take to-day and go all over the place. I have done the best I could all these years thee has been away, and I think things look fairly well."

"Deborah, will not to-morrow do? I am very anxious to get off early this morning."

"Where 's thee going?"

"I am going to Airlie ; I want to look into affairs there, and I am going to make arrangements to pay off the mortgage and all other debts. Then I am going to put at their disposal an income which will forever do away with the necessity for my cousin working in the fields like a laborer."

"Go lightly, Dick ; I 'd advise thee to do things in less speed. Robin is as proud as Lucifer, and refused all aid at the time of her father's death."

"That was natural, but I am the head of the family ; it is my right to help them, and I do not choose that they should be in poverty at Airlie when I have more than I know what to do with." And Dick moved restlessly about the room.

"But, Dick, to-morrow will be time enough to go to Airlie. I think thy own home needs thy attention first."

"No, Deborah, to-morrow will not be time enough ; I heard Robin say she was going to reap to-day and I must get there early."

"Dick, thee can no more prevent her from reaping than thee can prevent the grain from ripening. And I warn thee, cousin, she will not accept thy money."

"But, Deborah, why will she not ?"

"Because she has the same pride thee has ; the same pride that a man has about accepting any gift of money."

"But she must remember her mother. Just think what change of air and scene might do for Aunt Dorothea. Robin would have no right to refuse aid."

"Try it, and see for thyself. But what does thee think of her, Dick ?"

Dick did not reply. He could not, lest Deborah should have cause to open her eyes in amazement and pronounce him mad.

"Thee is disappointed in her, Dick ; I can see it in thy face." An odd expression came into his eyes, as he answered, slowly :

"No, that is not it ; I am not disappointed, but I cannot express my opinion, or impression exactly."

Deborah said no more. She was sure that Dick was disappointed ; perhaps he disapproved of Robin in some way, but would not give utterance to it. She shut her lips together in a firm way, as she thought how little any

one seemed to appreciate Robin, unless it was Jared, whom she feared the girl would marry. She determined to speak her mind to Dick :

“ Dick, I have something on my mind ; I should like to talk to thee a little about thy cousin.”

“ Very well, Deborah ; speak frankly. I have been gone so long that any light you can give me will be welcome.” And he prepared himself to listen.

“ Well, to begin with, Robin is a very unusual girl. She has had an unusual education, and she has been placed by circumstances which thee knows of in a very trying position. Jared Comly wants to marry her, and I am sure that Dorothea would be pleased if Robin accepts him. . Jared is a good, honest fellow, but he has a temper and is moody. I had made up my mind that I would speak to Dorothea when I was there the other day, but I believe I will enlist thee in the cause. Robin must not marry Jared.”

“ Do you think my cousin cares for him ? ” Dick put this question carelessly.

“ No, she does n't care for any man living. Jared is not the man to attract her, I am certain ; but thee knows that almost any man can marry a woman if he only hangs on long enough. Women are such fools that they often let themselves be worried into it.”

“ By the way, Deborah, did you ever know Henry Standish ? ” Dick asked, without seeming to pay attention to Deborah's remark,

"Yes. He comes down here pretty often, and we all think here in the neighborhood that he has a certain purpose in coming."

Instantly there rushed back upon Dick the recollection of Standish's glowing tributes to his cousin, and he remembered how he had complacently thought it might be a good thing for little Robin to marry Standish. He felt a sudden dread that Deborah was about to confirm his suspicion, but he asked indifferently :

"May I ask what purpose Standish is supposed to have in coming to this neighborhood?"

"We do not know surely, but we think he wants to marry Harmony Esten. He stays at The Hatch, and is very devoted to her."

"Indeed? Are you sure there is no other attraction?"

"What other attraction could there be to a man of his calibre, in a country neighborhood? Thee may be sure it is no love of nature that brings him; and he is a shade too stylish and worldly to fancy our country girls. Oh, it is Harmony, beyond doubt."

"Well, Deborah, Standish will be here at Ivanwold the last of the week, and I heartily wish him God-speed in his wooing." Dick tossed his hat lightly in the air, catching it on the end of his riding stick.

"Mercy alive! Dick, why does thee bring Henry Standish here so soon? I thought I was going to have thee to myself for a time. That 's just like a man; but if thee 's going to Airlie to-day thee 'd better be off."

"I won't have time now to go and get back again before dinner, so I will go immediately afterwards. Meanwhile I will have a look through the stables."

He started off with a light step and a gay whistle. Deborah looked after him, and said to herself: "Dick is still a good deal of a boy, for all his sabre-cut, and his foreign travel. I wonder what he is going to do with himself? and I wonder where in Christendom I'll find room for all the bits of rock, stones and trash he's brought home with him? He's for all the world like his father—poor Henry!"

Later in the day Dick dismounted at Airlie. He found his aunt waiting for him, in the cool sitting-room. The hot June sun had driven her in from her favorite place on the porch.

"Why, Richard, I've been expecting thee since early this morning," she said in an anxious tone.

"I tried to get here, dear aunt," he said, bending to kiss her hands, "but Deborah had so much to talk over that I was delayed. But where is my cousin?"

"Robin began harvesting to-day in earnest. She is somewhere out in the wheat-field." A frown gathered upon Dick's face.

"Aunt Dorothy, I know it is not for me to dictate or blame, but how can you consent to Robin's working as she does, among rough men, and in this blazing sun?"

"Richard, I know it seems terrible, but when Robin took the farm there seemed to be no other way to work

it, unless upon shares, and she was very determined not to have any one in that way. I should be heartily glad if there were any way out of it."

"There is a way out of it, Aunt Dorothy. I have come home for no other purpose than to try to smooth things at Airlie. I would have been here long ago, had I known how uncle left things. I want you to let me assume uncle's debts, free Airlie of all incumbrance and make you and Robin comfortable for the rest of your lives."

"Richard, thee is a generous-hearted man, but I do not see how we could let thee do what thee proposes."

"Listen, aunt; I have more than I want for myself, as you know. I want to share it with you and my cousin, and I shall be most miserable if you deny me what is my pleasure and my right." Then Dick spoke earnestly and eloquently, and at last Dorothea consented to allow him to do as he wished, provided he gained Robin's consent.

"But, aunt, why consult Robin? You own everything. I could take up these debts without my cousin's consent."

"Not exactly, Richard; Gilbert left no will, and even if he had left one, I consider that Robin is more entitled to decide matters than I; for she has taken the whole burden on her shoulders, and I will never go against her judgment."

"Very well, I will find Robin. We must talk it out to-day."

Away he strode to the field indicated. As he neared the spot the whirr of the machine fell upon his ear, and when he reached the gate, which stood wide open, horses and men, with Robin on the machine, came to view. The girl's figure was clearly defined against the blazing summer sky. Dick stood a moment unobserved, taking in the scene. Then he walked quickly over the stubble and approached them. In a moment they observed him and came to a standstill. Robin sprang lightly to the ground, not without a quick effort being made by her cousin to assist her. She put out her hand to him, while a glad smile of welcome lighted up her face.

"I am sorry, Dick, I am so busy and have so little time to see thee to-day ; thy first day almost, too," she said.

"I want to beg a few moments from you, Robin ; I have something to lay before you, and Aunt Dorothy will not decide matters without your consent. Will you come to the house a moment ?" Dick stood with his hat in his hand, gazing earnestly into his cousin's face. Jared heard the words and noticed the earnest gaze. He turned abruptly in his saddle. The horses, thinking it a signal, made a start ; the machine passed them and went on. Robin turned to one of the men, saying :

"Bill, tell Kane to leave his work and take my place on the machine ; I shall be back presently."

"Very well, Miss." The two turned towards the house.

"What is it thee has to say, Dick ?"

"I have something which I have come all the way from Germany to do, and I want your help and consent."

"Certainly, Dick, thee can always count upon me." And she glanced up at him confidently. But Dick looked grave and preoccupied. They proceeded almost in silence to the house. Robin, seeing her mother's eager face, when they entered the room, said :

"What is it, mother? Thee and Dick are very mysterious."

"Richard, thee must explain to her thyself."

"Robin, ever since I heard in April of the changes at Airlie I have felt aggrieved that I was not confided in. I closed up my work and came immediately home, and as the nearest relative to you, and I think I may say the dearest, it is my right to assume the responsibility of my uncle's debts. I proposed to Aunt Dorothy to clear the farm of mortgage, pay all other debts, buy back the sold land, and restore the place ; and I ask your consent. Your mother has given hers." Dick's announcement was abrupt. There was a long pause, while the three looked at one another.

"Does thee understand, daughter?"

"I think I do," she replied slowly.

"And you join in consent?" Dick eagerly asked. Robin stood erect. She had taken off her rough straw hat and was gazing intently at her mother.

"Thee consents, mother?" she asked in a clear, cool voice.

"Well, Robin, Richard has generously insisted upon it, and if thee will give thine I will not withhold mine."

"I will not give mine," she said simply.

"And why, may I ask?" inquired Dick.

"Because we cannot accept any gift or loan of money; mother and I are too proud, Dick."

"Proud? and towards me, your nearest relative?"

"Yes, prouder for that fact, Dick."

From the expression of Dick's face it was evident he was ready to break out impatiently and indignantly at his cousin's calm rejection of help; but he held himself well in hand, and merely said:

"Will you kindly let me know to what amount Airlie was involved when you took the farm, Robin?"

"There was a mortgage of twelve thousand dollars, and there were fifteen or sixteen hundred dollars of debts besides."

"How do you stand at present?"

Robin looked as if the interrogation were not to her taste. She felt she was perhaps going to be judged for the way she had handled affairs. She answered proudly:

"I sold some of the land, and was thereby able to pay off eight thousand dollars. There remain consequently four thousand of the mortgage. I have had the farm only a little over a year, and of course have done nothing further, save to pay the interest on the money. I am bending my energies now to pay something on

the other debts, for they were money my father had borrowed."

As she spoke, there recurred to Dick's mind his own statement to Standish that he should "return to America and take the helm." And here before him stood a young woman who already had the helm, and meant to keep it. Then he thought of Standish's enthusiastic remark that he felt like taking off his hat every time he thought of Miss Elgar. Dick felt, surging up in his heart, a strong echo of Standish's tribute. He gazed at his cousin, confronting him so proudly as she put before him a statement of her affairs, and he realized what heroic work she had done. He said to himself: "My little cousin has been the man of the family, verily, during all the years that I have selfishly followed my own bent; and now there seems nothing left for me but to do her honor." He stepped forward to his cousin, and, taking both her hands, said:

"Robin, it seems to me, as I look at you and hear you, that your childish wish has been realized. You are a far bigger man than I; but will you not let Cousin Dick share with you and Aunt Dorothy in the work of restoring the old farm? I have had it in my heart ever since I met Standish to come home and offer you part of my fortune. If you will not take it as a gift, then let it be a loan. Surely you will take it from Cousin Dick?" And he bent towards her entreatingly, still holding both hands fast.

"No, Dick, I could only take such a thing from a father or brother ; scarcely then even, but from thee I could not."

"Am I less your cousin than I was years ago, when you used to come to me and put your arms about my neck and tell me your childish woes? You loved me then next to your father and mother ; am I less near now?"

"Yes, Dick ; thee cannot help being less near. Thee comes back after years of absence. As I look at thee I have to try hard to realize that thee is the same Dick I loved, and love still," she said, looking him full in the face. "I shall be able to work out our affairs in time, and I thank thee from my heart for thy generous offer, but I cannot accept it ; it would not seem right."

Dick dropped her hands, and stepped back.

"I think you do not yet realize how in earnest I am, Robin. I tell you I cannot and will not give up my plan of assuming the Airlie debts. It is my right, and you ought to see it in that way. You should think of your invalid mother, to whom change of air and scene would be every thing. You ought to think of your own youth and health. To me the thought of you out in this hot sun, doing rough, hard work, is perfectly intolerable. I can think of nothing but the peasant women of Germany, harnessed to carts and dragging heavy loads. I tell you, cousin, I cannot remain in this country and live at Ivanwold knowing that a young and

gently-nurtured girl is working day and night, struggling under a load of debt, while I, her kinsman, have more than I can use, and would share with her the last cent I have. For God's sake, Robin, let me do this thing."

"Dick, I cannot ; I should be miserable. I shall be glad to have thee do any thing thee can to make mother's life brighter, but my father's debts I alone must wipe out. I cannot take thy money ; it would not seem right."

At these words Dick's face flushed, then paled, and a resolute look swept over it which betokened that the combat was not yet over. There was a light in his eyes that had not gleamed there before ; the scar on his cheek stood out in a dull red line, in contrast to the pallor of his face.

"If you will not take my money at Airlie, will you take me ? Robin, will you marry me ?"

Dorothea started from her chair.

"Richard, thee goes too far ; thee presses Robin beyond her freedom." Then she sank back, and covered her face with her hands.

Robin turned upon Dick. Her old straw hat fell to the floor. Through the tan upon her face glowed the hot color ; her lips were parted, her eyes blazed with sudden shame and amazement. Dick sustained her gaze in a grave, composed way ; determination and something besides were clearly written on his face and in his eyes. Robin faced him, spellbound. Utter stillness prevailed for a moment. At last Dorothea said :

"Thee forgets, Richard ; cousins do not talk of marriage among Friends."

"Cousin Dorothea, there is nothing that stands between us, save Robin's distinct refusal. I beg of her, and of you, to accept me." Then, turning to his cousin, he bent his head and looked into her eyes.

"Robin, my little cousin, will you marry me?"

"No, Dick, I will not marry thee. I know thy offer springs from kindly motives, however mistaken they may be. I cannot accept it." She turned away proudly. Just then the door opened, and Joppa, putting her head in, said :

"Miss Rob, Miss Harm'ny and Mr. Watkins is on the po'ch," and the door was shut as quickly as it had been opened.

"Mother, I cannot see them now ; will thee do it for me?" She turned to make her escape by the opposite door.

"Robin, I cannot consider your refusal of to-day as final. I have been precipitate. Please think over what I have said. I will wait."

"But, Dick, it is final." And she shut the door behind her.

"Richard, what possessed thee to do such an extraordinary thing as to propose to marry Robin, whom thee saw only yesterday for the first time in ten years? Is it one of the old, mad pranks of thy boyhood days?"

"No, aunt, it is no such prank. It may have been mad, I am inclined to think it was ; but I am in earnest,

and I am prepared to stand by it. Would you object to me as a son ? ”

“ I do not know ; thee seems like Robin's brother.”

“ I do not feel in the least like her brother, but I do feel very much like your son,” he said, smiling.

“ Well, we cannot talk of it any longer, for, inopportune as it is to see visitors, I must go out to see Harmony and Thaddeus. Give me thy arm, Richard.”

They went out to the porch, where Dick was speedily presented to the two young people. He seated himself by Harmony's side, and proceeded to make himself delightfully companionable ; and she told him of her father's and Thaddy's visit to him of the afternoon. They soon fell to recalling places and people they had both seen in Europe, and the gay, light talk lasted till the sun went down. Harmony at last asked :

“ Where is Robin ? I want to see her before I go.”

“ Thee must stay to tea, Harmony, and thee, too, Thaddeus. Robin will not be in for some little time yet. Richard, thee too will remain ? ”

“ No, aunt, I think not,” he said, rising. “ I must take myself off immediately ; but, with your permission, I shall return to-morrow at an early hour ? ” And he glanced at his aunt with a look she understood.

“ I shall expect thee to-morrow, and every other day besides, Richard, as long as thee stays among us.”

“ Very well, aunt. Miss Esten, I shall very speedily return your father's visit, which I have so unfortunately

missed to-day ; and yours too, Mr. Watkins. I am hoping to make Ivanwold more attractive than it has been for the past few years, so that my neighbors will seek me often." And kissing his aunt's hand, after the foreign fashion, he bowed to Harmony and Thaddy and went out to where his horse was tied. Thaddy escorted him across the lawn, and stood talking with him, as he paused to adjust his stirrup before riding away.

"What a handsome man your nephew is, Mrs. Elgar ; I have n't seen such a looking man in years."

"Yes, Richard is a handsome man. He is not my nephew, he is only my husband's cousin ; but he has always been more like my own son."

When she had said this, a pretty faint color came to her faded, worn cheek. It recalled the scene in the sitting-room, and brought back the words that had passed between Robin and Dick.

CHAPTER XX.

DISQUIET.

ROBIN did not go back to the wheat-field. She had a fear that some of the party on the porch would seek her there, and she felt she could not endure to hear Thaddy's high voice and slipshod sentences, nor even Harmony's gentle speech ; much less could she bear encountering Dick. At the mere thought of him, she shut her hands together and hot waves of color crept up over neck and brow to the edge of her hair. She hurried past the garden, through the orchard, to the shady dell behind it. Adsum had followed her, and when she sat down on a flat stone half covered with moss, she caught sight of the old dog, and said almost impatiently :

"Go away, Adsum ; does n't thee see I want to be alone ? I cannot always have thee following me, thee 's too inquisitive ; go away at once."

Something in the grave, solemn gaze of the dog disconcerted her, and made her impatient with him for the first time in her life. As if he understood, he walked discreetly away with ears drooping, and lay down at a

distance, his head stretched out on his extended paws, and his eyes fixed watchfully and faithfully upon her. He had played with her when she was a child, he had kept the secret she had imparted years before, he had sympathized with her in her father's death; he knew that some other crisis was at hand, and that it was his duty to be on guard.

Soon the stillness of his young mistress and the soft breeze in the dell lulled him to forgetfulness. But they did not lull Robin in like manner. Was she the same girl, she asked herself, who yesterday morning, while cutting butter-cloths, had dreaded an encounter with Jared, and who in the short twenty-four hours that had intervened, had met a strange cousin, had been entreated to accept the half of a fortune, and had had an offer of marriage? She almost laughed aloud, it was all so amazingly ridiculous. Had Dick been crazy? she asked herself; did he suppose she was so little a woman that she would accept a man whom she had known but twenty-four hours? Did he really contemplate marrying her, merely to have his own way about paying their debts? She recalled the look in her cousin's eyes as he bent his head to look into hers, and again the color mounted to her cheek. She thought of the determined look about his lips, and she remembered how, after he had spoken, his face had paled, bringing out in startling relief the long, red scar on his cheek. What had he meant by it all? If he had loved her she could have understood the look in his

eyes and his persistence. Did he think she had so little spirit as to marry a man in order that Airlie might flourish once more? She had always thought of Dick as a brother; she remembered him the day he broke Comanche, and the day he went away; was it possible that this man, who an hour before had asked her to marry him, was the same she had so often thrown her arms about and lovingly kissed when she was a little girl? She buried her face in her hands at this overwhelming recollection. Dick had recalled the same thing that afternoon; he had not forgotten it either. He had said that he could not stay in America and live at Ivanwold, knowing that she was working like a laborer, while he had more than he could use. She knew that she should have felt the same were their positions reversed. What could she do to wipe out the memory of the afternoon? How could she meet Dick henceforth? She had made her rejection positive; surely he would take it as such, in spite of what he said when she left the room. Then her thoughts came back again to the starting-point, and again she went over the scene and the same disjointed reflections, until the big bell clanged out on the evening air, and she knew that it was the call to come in from the fields. She sprang up; Adsum got up, stretched himself, and mutely asked if he might walk at her side; but she hurried back through the orchard without heeding him. She entered the house from the back, and seeking Joppa, she inquired:

"Has any one remained to tea, Joppa?"

"Yes, Miss ; Miss Harm'ny and Mr. Watkins stayed, but Mr. Dick, he 's gone."

"Mr. Jared has not come in yet, I suppose?"

"No, Miss, they aint come in from the field yet."

"Do not announce tea till I am down-stairs again."

In a few moments she returned in a fresh summer gown, with no traces of the afternoon's surprises visible, and joined them on the porch. Dorothea looked at her anxiously. She wondered what her child was thinking.

"Did Jared come in with thee, daughter?"

"No, mother, Jared will not be in till late. I came in because I knew Harmony was here and I wanted to see her."

She could not betray that she had not returned to the field at all that afternoon, for she did not wish her mother to know how profoundly she had been stirred by her cousin's monstrous offer.

"Robin, I met your cousin, Mr. Elgar, this afternoon. I think he is one of the handsomest and most *distinguished* men I ever saw. His manners are charming. Do you suppose any girl in this country has half a chance?" Harmony laughingly inquired.

"I think it likely that my cousin is still heart-whole. Shall I bespeak you, Harmony?"

"Aw, come now, Miss Rob, don' let Miss Harm'ny have anybody else. I 've got all I can stan' to be jealous of now," said Thaddy, plaintively.

Just then the announcement of tea carried them into the dining-room. When tea was over Robin said :

"Harmony, cannot you remain at Airlie to-night? Mr. Watkins will stop at The Hatch and leave word."

"Yes, I will stay, Robin, if a message can be sent to father."

So it was arranged. Robin had an unaccountable reluctance to being left to her own thoughts, or to being questioned anxiously by her mother. She wanted to put away all memory of the afternoon, and she felt that if she kept Harmony it would prevent her mother from talking over her cousin's strange and startling proposition. She hailed with relief the deliverance from her own disturbed mind. Thaddy went off cheerfully upon his errand to Captain Esten, and the three women remained on the porch. Jared joined them for a few moments, but he was very taciturn and soon left them to themselves. Finally they adjourned to the house for the night.

Scarcely did the two young women find themselves in the shelter of Robin's special rooms when Harmony broke out :

"What is the matter, Robin?"

"Why do you ask, Harmony?"

"There is a nervousness about you which I never saw in you before; I noticed it as soon as you came on the porch to-night."

"Well, Harmony, I have had a trying day; the first day of wheat-cutting is the worst day to me of the whole

year, and that is why I wanted you to stay. You are so bright and you never have any worries or money troubles."

"Have you any new worry about the old debts, Robin?"

"No, not exactly, but I am always more or less worried; especially as I never know how my crops will turn out."

"Robin, that is not truly what is worrying you. It must be Jared."

"Well, Jared has been, as you know, a worry to me all the spring; but do let us talk of something else." And Robin threw herself on an old-fashioned lounge which was pulled up near the open windows, while Harmony proceeded to take down her soft, light hair, hunting, with mirror in hand, for an imaginary gray hair. She said, while thus occupied:

"Do tell me all about your cousin. What do you think of him? Is he going to stay here? Will he keep open house at Ivanwold? I suppose you know Henry Standish is coming down soon to stay with him?"

"No, I did not know it; who told you?"

"Why, Mr. Standish wrote me, and he told me of his meeting with your cousin in Germany. But I suppose you know all about it?"

"I merely know that they met; I have not heard any particulars," she answered indifferently.

Thereupon Harmony began to relate the contents of Standish's letter, with a running fire of comment; to

all of which Robin listened in silence. At last she said :

"Do you think Mr. Standish meant me to hear all this ? would he like it ?"

"Oh, yes, he said I might read the letter to you. He was afraid you might never know in what complete ignorance Mr. Elgar was concerning the complications here at Airlie. He felt that some of us, conspicuously myself, had been doing your cousin injustice."

"Well, Harmony, my cousin is a generous-hearted man. Do you know he offered us to-day the half of his fortune ? He wanted to take the Airlie debts, pay them off and buy back the land."

Harmony dropped brush and glass and came to the sofa.

"Just what I had an idea he would do as soon as I had read Mr. Standish's letter. And yet you look grave and unhappy to-night, instead of radiant at such generous good-luck."

"But, Harmony, we would not let Dick do it. Mother and I refused ; we were too proud ; but I have been wondering if we have done right, for mother's sake. She looks frail and worn, and worries secretly about these debts, and about me. What would you have done ?"

"Being Harmony Esten, I should have accepted the offer gratefully and said 'Thank you' ; but if I had been Robin Elgar, with her high notions of the fitness of

things and her stern Quaker independence, I should have snubbed the noble cousin, as you probably did. And yet, come to think of it, I do not think the cousin looked as if he had been snubbed ; he seemed rather joyous than otherwise, I noticed " ; and Harmony fixed a keen look upon her companion's face.

But Robin did not observe it. She was troubled and disturbed. Dick's words kept coming back again and again to her mind : " You have no right to refuse, for your mother's sake ; think what change of air and scene might do for her." This he had said before he had rushed headlong into the fantastic offer of marriage, of which no word should ever escape her lips. She could speak of the generous offer of help to Harmony, but of the other, not a word. She sat half reclining on the lounge, her head resting upon her hand, lost in deep thought, until a soft, uncertain, groping step was heard in the hall outside. Robin sprang quickly and opened the door, saying :

" It is mother."

" I heard your voices, girls, and I came to hear if you were saying any thing interesting."

" We were talking about Dick, mother."

" About Dick ?" she asked, with a quick look at her daughter.

" I have been telling Robin," said Harmony, " of a letter I had from Henry Standish, and of his meeting Mr. Elgar in Germany." Then she again related what

the letter contained, after which she led the conversation with tact into another channel, in the hope of diverting Robin's mind. At last Dorothea rose and said :

"Come, girls, it is very late, and it is time to go to bed. Robin, thee has to be up with the birds, so thee must not talk any more to-night." She kissed Harmony. Robin went with her to her own room, soon returning ; and the short summer night grew to be an early summer morning.

Meanwhile Dick, after leaving the Airlie gate behind him, had turned his horse's head in the opposite direction from his home. Nothing but a long, hard ride would calm the tumult he was in. He was amazed at himself. He had been six days in America, and he had made an offer of marriage to a woman he had seen and known only twenty-four hours. What a madman, what a fool he had been ! Was he in love with her, or was it a bit of chivalrous feeling, of wishing to be a protection and shield to these lonely women, who would not accept his money ? What ailed him that he should rush headlong into an offer of marriage to an unknown cousin, which did not even commend itself to her and had only roused amazement and indignation in her ? he had seen it in her face when she had turned her eyes upon him, and again when she had declined and proudly left the room. What special imp had had possession of him to make him play the idiot so conspicuously ?

He had gained nothing except to deserve being thought a hot-headed fool. He had come to America to help two lonely kinswomen, and within twenty-four hours he had managed so badly that his help had been rejected ; and he must then offer to throw himself in with his money, as a possible inducement to his cousin, his little Robin, who had been his boyhood's companion. He remembered the day he had parted from her as a child ; he could feel the little arms even yet, and the boyish lump which had come in his throat. He thought of her yesterday as she stood in the dairy door, and again to-day when she had laid before him, reluctantly, the state of her affairs and the amount of her debts, which she had said proudly she alone could wipe out. Then he saw her again on the reaping-machine, with Comly on one of the horses as companion, and he smiled grimly as he thought that perhaps he would have no power to alter things. He remembered how complacently he had planned in Germany to get rid of Comly and perhaps take Standish into consideration as a possible lover, when Standish had not even raised his eyes to her, but was thinking of another. And Dick swore at himself in good, strong German for the blunders he had made, and, for aught he knew, at the blunders he should probably continue to make, unless some special Providence intervened.

He took off his hat in the soft summer night and began to wonder where he was. The moon had just

risen and was beginning to cast queer shadows across the road. He went on for another half-mile, until he came to a fork in the road ; then he realized that he was some fifteen miles from Ivanwold, and already the evening was half spent. But it made little difference to him ; he had the whole of the short summer night before him, and his own disturbed, disjointed thoughts for company.

CHAPTER XXI.

A BOLD RESOLVE.

THE short hours between midnight, which saw Dick dismount wearily at Ivanwold, and the early dawn of the summer morning were spent by him in carrying on a restless warfare with himself, and in trying to see his way out of the position his absurd conduct had led him into. Whichever way he turned he saw no excuse for his rashness. He said to himself that while his cousin was beautiful and winning enough to tempt any man into committing a folly, still, he had no justification for committing that folly after seeing her only twice; it was unpardonable, almost brutal. He had startled and disgusted her, and made an ass of himself; and what was to be done about it? He sat and smoked at the open windows until faint streaks of dawn appeared in the heavens. His thoughts became gradually calmer and clearer with the brightening sky. He made up his mind that, imprudent and rash as he had been, he had no desire to accept his cousin's rejection, but on the contrary he was distinctly conscious of a passionate

wish to win her ; and he resolved boldly and manfully to try to carry the citadel. It would have to be stormed again and again, perhaps, but he was not the man to give up and back down from a position, though it had been made through a blunder. The next morning at breakfast Deborah said :

"I thought I smelled smoke in the middle of the night, Dick ; did thee notice it?"

"Yes, Deborah, I noticed it very decidedly ; I was smoking."

"Thee was smoking in the middle of the night ? What an outlandish heathen thee is ; thee 'll be burning us in our beds next." After a moment she added :

"What success did thee have in thy interview at Airlie yesterday?"

"None ; they would not accept a loan of money, nor help of any kind whatever."

"I was afraid that would be the way of it ; but does not thee think they may be induced to accept in time ?" she asked.

"I will never offer them money again, Deborah." There was a long silence, while Deborah seemed to be thinking intently. At last she said suddenly :

"See here, Dick, why does n't thee marry Robin?"

"Because she will have none of me," he quickly replied.

"But thee does n't know whether she will or not, till thee's been here long enough to warrant thee in asking her."

"Ay, there 's the rub."

"Rub? what rub? what does thee mean?"

"Nothing. By the way, I am going to town before Standish comes to buy some horses; there is n't a decent horse on the place. I must also look up a competent groom, and buy a trap or two. Will you go with me, Deborah?"

"No, Dick, I 've no notion of broiling in town at this time of the year. If thee is going to buy horses, why not look at Robin's four-year-old? he is thoroughbred and is for sale."

"Would he be up to my weight, and do for cross-country riding?"

"I don't know, he is a beauty, and Robin broke him herself."

"The devil! I beg your pardon, Deborah, but is there any thing under the sun out of a woman's way that my cousin has not done?" he asked impatiently.

"She has only done what she thought was within the province of a farmer," Deborah replied in a defensive tone.

"Well, I would gladly buy the horse in a moment if I dared, whether it was fit to ride or not; but I will not risk offering to buy it. I risked too much yesterday to be willing to put myself again in that same peril. I am going to Airlie presently, and I will casually mention that I think of buying horses, and if hers is offered for sale I will buy it."

"Going to Airlie again to-day?" Deborah ejaculated in surprise. Then some sudden suggestion coming to her mind, she quickly held her peace and looked at Dick suspiciously. He smiled back at her composedly, as he read the thought that had flashed into her brain, as clearly as if she had given expression to it. Again he set out for Airlie. There was perhaps less of complacency and buoyancy about him than there had been the day before, but he was none the less determined to have his own way in the end, and to carry out every thing which had been refused by his cousin. He felt that, while he did not exactly know upon what ground he stood with her, he was better equipped to face the position, whatever it was, for having made up his mind to a plan of action. He found Dorothea in the wide, cool hall which extended through the house. Every thing was silent about the place.

"Shall we be undisturbed here, aunt?"

"Yes, Richard, no one is about. Robin is of course out in the harvest-field, so we shall be perfectly undisturbed." And she waited for Dick to begin the conversation.

He felt for a moment or two like a boy who was about to answer for some misdemeanor. He fixed his eyes upon his aunt with a half-defiant, half-amused look in their blue depths, which to Dorothea was a well-remembered trick of Dick's.

"Well, Richard?"

"Well, aunt?"

He paused, then plunged into the subject boldly: "The only explanation I have to offer for yesterday's extraordinary *denouement* is, that I was terribly in earnest, and that I rushed headlong into an offer to my cousin which my better judgment ought to have told me would shock and perhaps disgust her. I dimly felt the first day I saw Robin, that it would be only a question of time with me. I realize now that I have been carrying the memory of my little cousin about with me during all the years I have been away, and ever since the April night in Germany when Standish told me about her, her goodness, her beauty, her intellect, her bravery in coming to the front to do battle against debt, I do not think there has been a waking moment that she has been absent from my mind. I did not realize it in the least until yesterday, when she so proudly refused my offer to assume her debts. Then in an uncontrollable moment I offered, what I knew I should offer sooner or later, myself."

Dick had spoken earnestly and with conviction. Dorothea was visibly affected.

"Thee means me to understand, Richard, that it was not merely a generous wish to serve us that hurried thee into thy offer, but an interest in Robin, which with time might grow to be love?"

"Interest is perhaps not just the word I should use, aunt. As for time, if twenty-four hours can reduce a

man to such imbecility as I showed yesterday, Heaven defend him from any extension of time."

"It was most extraordinary and incredible, Richard."

"No, it was not, when you come to think of it, Aunt Dorothy. I have spent the years since I left America in absorbing work. I have given myself up to study, travel and research, with little time for the things that most men find pleasure in. Of course, I have seen considerable of German society, but the *frauleins* were never attractive to me. I saw something from time to time of English society, too, but it is a curious fact that American men rarely wish to marry women of other countries than their own. Then I met Standish, who pictured my cousin in terms calculated to fire the imagination of any man, and it is evident mine was a responsive one. I thought of nothing for three months but of coming home to my kinswomen, of taking the load off my cousin's shoulders, of sharing my fortune with her; and when I saw her, fully justifying all the tributes Standish had paid her, it was but a short step from offering to share a fortune to offering a love which sprang to life, *Minerva-like*, upon the instant. I have led the life that most men lead, selfish and perhaps thoughtless. I am not very much of a sinner, nor am I particularly saintly, but my record is fairly clean. Aunt Dorothy, are you willing I should try to win Robin?"

"Yes, Richard, since thee has told me thee cares for her." Dorothea smiled faintly as she recalled the con-

versation she had had with Robin, only two days before. Here was her daughter's ideal, she said to herself, if she would only recognize it. Then she remembered Jared, and felt with a pang that it was no happy outlook for him to have so formidable a rival in this manly, distinguished cousin, even though he had been rejected the day before.

"Do you think I have totally ruined my chances with my cousin?" Dick at length asked.

"I cannot possibly tell, Richard; I never saw Robin so shaken, so unlike herself, as she has been ever since yesterday. I learned accidentally that she did not go back to the wheat-field after she left us in the sitting-room. I have no means of knowing where she went, or what she was thinking. I could not, of course, spy upon her. I asked her this morning a question or two, but she stopped me and begged me to leave her in peace, and above all not to talk to her of thee."

"Aunt Dorothy, I have no idea of pressing her in any way, or seeking her at present; will you assure her of this? Next week I shall be in town. I want to purchase some horses, find a groom, and renovate Ivanwold to some extent. Then Standish will be down for some time. After that I may go to New Haven to present some letters from the German University, which will, I think, be of service to me in certain of my plans. I have a strong desire also to go as soon as possible up among the Laurentide Hills. I have had little time to

study those famous rocks. There is a vast field of exploration before me in this country, and I have years of work mapped out. But I did not mean to talk of my work ; may I ask you a few questions, aunt ?”

“As many as thee pleases, Richard.”

“I did not get a clear idea yesterday how the mortgage is placed or who holds it. Do not think me inquisitive.”

“Surely, Richard, thee is fully entitled to know all about it, even if Robin does not feel that we can accept thy generous help.”

After a few skilfully-put questions, and a clear and perfectly unsuspecting frankness in answering, Dick was soon in possession of what he wished to know : the names of the persons holding the mortgage, and the names of those from whom Gilbert had borrowed money, were soon stowed away in his memory ; after which he rose to go.

“Will thee not stay and dine, Richard ?”

“Not to-day, dear aunt ; I shall not show myself for a time, in the hope of allaying my cousin's fears and assuaging her disgust. I am too deeply in earnest to imperil my cause by any rashness, however slight.” And Dick took his leave.

Once outside the grounds he drew out a note-book and transferred to it the names of the persons who held Airlie in their grasp—all of them within a radius of twenty miles—and he exultantly felt that it would be no

fault of his if he did not see them, to a man, and in a few days have in his own hands the note of every debt upon the old farm. Once in his possession, they would never see the light of day again. Meanwhile, when they were safely destroyed, he would have to hold himself prepared to face his cousin and the consequences if she should find out that he had taken the bit in his teeth. He argued that it would be six months before she would be called upon to meet the interest again, and if by that time he had not won her, it would be all over for him ; a little added scorn and indignation from her and pain to himself would make little difference in the long account of general misery which in that event would be his portion. But suddenly the other side of the argument presented itself in such an overwhelming light that Dick checked his horse for a moment. Had he any right to take the bit in his teeth in this arbitrary fashion ? he asked himself. Had he any right to do by this fearless cousin what he would not dare to do if she were a man similarly placed ? Was he not bound in all honor to observe her rights in the matter ? Had she not shown the same scruples about her father's debts that a son would have felt ? Was he to disregard them because she was a woman ? Was he to act according to the standard the world had set up for women, rather than by the strict code set up for his own sex ? He knew he would be excused in the eyes of men for taking matters out of his cousin's hands and overriding her

conscientious scruples, for it was popular to suppose that women always forgave such masterful interferences when it was for their good. Dick saw clearly that the old time-worn standard would not do when it came to his cousin. He began to suspect that it would not do any longer, any way. It was not for him to hold this woman's pride and keen sense of honor less than his own. Would he himself ever tolerate any one who should take upon himself to discharge debts of his without his consent? "By the Lord, no!" he emphatically said aloud. He started his horse and rode on. He thought to himself bitterly: "There is nothing I can do, but to stand by with what control I can muster; see her toil, and eat my heart out in vain longings to share with her what she refuses."

Early Monday morning Dick went to town. He had an interview with his bankers, and a long, confidential talk with his man of business, before whom he laid the financial affairs of his relatives. Dick had had a lingering hope that this shrewd man might find a way of secret help without himself appearing in the matter at all. He knew there were ways of negotiating new loans at lower rates of interest, and he knew that notes often changed hands without the principal parties interested knowing of it for some time. Keen was his disappointment therefore when he was told that the only thing he could do would be to buy up the notes on Airlie and hold them; that no lower rates of interest nor new loans

could be managed without his relatives being party to the transactions. So his last hope was gone ; he was tied hand and foot ; he might better have remained in Germany, certainly it would have been better for his peace of mind. If he had not rushed headlong into an offer of marriage, he might have had a chance perhaps to win his cousin to accepting substantial cousinly help, but now he could not dare even to speak to her of her affairs, without its being a tocsin of alarm to her. He was not only in the exasperating position of a rejected suitor, but probably of a rejected, scorned cousin as well. And it would be no easy task to win her back to any thing like confidence in him, but win her he must, he would, he told himself.

He made his purchases, and before leaving town went through the museum and offices of the Geological Survey. An expedition was ready to start out under the government for an exploration to cover several months ; and as Dick noted the perfect equipment of the party he was sorely tempted to cast in his lot with them. But the memory of his cousin and of the position which he must face soon drove the temptation from his mind, and before the week was out he returned to the country, where he was speedily followed by the new groom in charge of several fine horses, a new cart and a closed carriage ; which caused Deborah to remark, as she saw the procession file past the house on the way to the stables ;

"Thee must be intending to spend all thy time on the turnpike, Dick."

"I am, Deborah ; on the turnpike between Ivanwold and Airlie."

Meantime Standish was detained in New York, and wrote that he should not be able to come to the neighborhood before the first of August. Deborah was glad of this respite, and was secretly hoping that something would detain him permanently. Dick, too, was relieved that he would not put in an appearance immediately. He wished to have an opportunity of seeing his cousin without the presence of strangers, in order that she might realize that he was content to let matters rest as they were for the present, that he meant to be only Cousin Dick to her ; and he was anxious to know if she would accept him upon this footing. He was overwhelmed with impatience to go to Airlie. He felt that he did not recognize himself at all in this new rôle, and the second day after his return found him, just before sundown, drawing on his gloves ready to start. The new cart was at the door, and the new groom in plain, dark livery stood at the horse's head. Deborah said :

"Thy turnout is very fine for these parts, Dick, and thy man in livery will make the good folk stare as thee drives through Fenny Drayton. What they will think when they see the closed carriage thee bought, I cannot fancy."

"They no doubt will be grateful to me for giving

them something to talk about. As for the brougham I do not suppose I shall ever drive in it."

"Who then will, Dick?"

"Well, Deborah, I was thinking of you and Aunt Dorothy, who is unable to ride about in the rough, open carts and rockaways which abound in the neighborhood. I am hoping she will use it mainly."

"Dick, thee 's a good fellow, and I wish thee good luck in thy wooing."

"Thanks."

Dick gathered up the reins and drove rapidly away.

CHAPTER XXII.

A COUSINLY FOOTING.

MEANTIME the day's work was over on the farm. The horses were plodding on their way from the harvest-field to the stable, followed by the men. Robin had preceded them a few moments, and had gone to the house, jaded and tired in mind and body. For the first time in all her healthful young life, she was discontented and discouraged. Every thing seemed to press upon her, to hem her in. The debts and the heavy mortgage had weighed upon her mind and heart for the last week, an oppressive burden. Ever since the conversation in the sitting-room with Dick, her financial situation had never left her mind. The cheerful courage which had sustained her ever since her father's death, seemed suddenly to leave her. She reasoned with herself that the position was in no way changed, no worse than it had been for a year; in fact it was a trifle better, for the farm was being vigorously worked, and she hoped at the end of the year to have something to show for it. She had lain awake the night before trying to compute how

long it would be before she should be free from debt, but the time stretched to many years, and years of incessant toil ; which in her young life would not matter much, but her mother's life would perhaps be spent before any lightening of the burden would come to them.

And Dick had said that her mother ought to have change of air and scene ; how could they be obtained ? What could she do ? She tried to think of some way of making a payment during the present year ; the only thing she could do would be to try to make a new loan at a lower rate of interest, but that would be only a drop from the bucket. There was no help to be had from the farm ; it was doing all it could in furnishing their living. What little ready money came in went for the interest on the debts and for fertilizers. Wheat had sold during the winter at almost the lowest rate it had touched in years. Where did the benefit come in ? she wondered ; who made the profits ? She toiled day and night, and what had she to show for it ? She sent her produce to the town markets ; she received the lowest possible prices. The middlemen, the grocer, huckster or grain merchant, sold at an advance and made the profit. Why was it ? Then she remembered that it was nearly time for the tax-collector to appear ; she should have to meet her taxes, but how ? Why should she pay taxes at all ? True, she owned the farm, but she was a woman ; she had no voice in the laws which controlled and governed her property. The constitution and laws of the country did not recog-

nize her as a person, a citizen, or a responsible being in any way ; therefore, why should she be legally held for taxes ? What man would allow himself to be taxed unless he had a voice affecting those taxes ? Where was the justice of it ? She might do as the two Connecticut women had done, who refused to pay taxes on that same ground and finally disposed of their property in order to evade compulsory payment. It was just as much a cause for insurrection among women as the causes which led to the War of Independence had been. It was just as clearly "taxation without representation" as it had been in the days of the Stamp Act.

She smiled to herself faintly as she pictured her mother's horror could she know the full extent of her daughter's heretical opinions. But Robin knew they were not heretical ; they were the opinions that forced themselves into a woman's heart and mind when she came to stand side by side in equal contest with men ; when she like them was either a property-holder, taxed directly, or a consumer of food and stuffs, taxed indirectly. Whichever way her weary mind turned it found no recognition, only injustice and one-sidedness. She wondered how long it would be before the world was righted. Then her thoughts came back to the immediate situation.

She would have to satisfy the tax-collector when he came, however much she might rebel. She would have to go on toiling, earning bit by bit, and there would never

be any thing for change of air and scene for her weary, frail mother. She thought of Dick, whom she had not seen since the memorable day in the sitting-room ; good, generous Dick, who wanted to share with them every cent he had ; who, in order to do it, had offered himself in chivalric feeling, because she had said she could only accept from a father or brother, and knowing he could be neither, he had offered a closer tie, in order to care for her mother and herself. It had been a wild and foolish thing for him to do, upon the spur of the moment, but it had been doubly foolish of her to be so indignant and upset by it, and not to see at once that it was a bit of mistaken chivalry. Had he not distinctly turned to her mother as well as to her when he said : " I beg of her and of you to accept me ? "

" Had the look in the eyes been meant for both too ? " some sly, inner voice asked her ; but Robin sternly took no notice of the wee, small voice, which had been plying and confusing her with questions for the past ten days. After the first few hours of shock had passed which succeeded the conversation in the sitting-room, she had been able to shake off the fright and bewilderment ; she was able at last to see Dick's offer in the way it had been meant, and she felt at peace. She was now prepared to meet him as if nothing had happened. She was able to think of him as a generous, chivalrous man, not perhaps just the same Dick she had been so eager to resemble, but her kinsman, her friend. She felt that Dick had gone to

town only to take himself out of the way. He was, no doubt, as uncomfortable over the situation as she had been, and he would feel relieved to know that she had dismissed the whole occurrence from her mind and would meet him on the old cousinly footing.

Thinking thus she descended to the tea-table, from which in a short time she went with her mother to the cool porch, where the twilight hour was usually spent. Robin leaned in her favorite way upon the railing. She was trying to put out of her mind the debts on the farm, the inequality of the laws towards women, and, lastly, the worry about Jared, his love and his tempers. He had been very taciturn all during harvest, and his stern face had been a constant reminder to the girl of his undeclared love. She wished with all her heart, as he alone could speak and end the discomfort of both, that he would elect to do so. The sound of wheels made Robin start from her reverie. She saw a light cart come swiftly up the lane, which she did not recognize. It was not yet dark, and as a man jumped down and handed the reins to a liveried servant, she knew it must be Dick ; Cousin Dick ; whom she had resolved to meet as if nothing had happened. A wild impulse seized her ; she could not face him ; every drop of blood receded from her face, leaving her as white as the gown she wore. She turned suddenly, as if to make her escape through the house, but she was arrested by her mother's quiet tone of surprise ; "Thee 's not going, Robin ? it is only Dick."

There was a moment of inward struggle ; then she turned back to the railing composedly.

"No, mother, I am not going ; why should I ? As thee says, it is only Dick, Cousin Dick."

She said the last words in a lingering tone, as if to reassure herself, then quietly awaited his approach. By the time her cousin reached her, she put out her hand in a cheerful and perfectly unembarrassed way, saying cordially :

"We are very glad to see thee back, Dick."

"Ah ! Richard, I have missed thee sorely," said Dorothea. Then Robin continued :

"Yes, Dick, we have missed thee. I sincerely hope we are now going to have a chance of knowing our cousin once again."

Something in the tone or the words made Dick's heart sink. It was certainly cordial, very cousinly, and very ignoring of the past ; just the tone and manner he had been telling himself he hoped for. But the eagerness died out of his face and the thrill from his heart.

"It is delightful to be missed, but more delightful to be told of it in such sweet, cousinly fashion," he said lightly and gayly. There was just the faintest emphasis upon "cousinly" ; and for a brief instant, in the fast-gathering gloom of the porch, Dick's eyes encountered Robin's, and the footing upon which they should henceforth meet was distinctly understood and accepted by both.

Dorothea, too, comprehended the words and tone,

though she had not seen the quick flash of understanding which the last lingering rays of daylight had transmitted. Dick then proceeded to give a slight account of his doings in town. In a few moments a chance question led him to talk of Germany, and in turn of his travels. He finally said :

“ Aunt Dorothy, I brought up with me to-night a collection of foreign photographs, which I wish you and my cousin to have ; they may perhaps interest you.”

He called to his man to bring them from the cart. A large portfolio was soon upon the table in the sitting-room. Dorothea and Robin bent over them with absorbing interest, while Dick explained them. There were photographs of every country from Norway to the Nile ; and as Robin gazed at the pictures and listened to the description of the places she had read of and dreamed of all her life, it was almost as if she had seen them in person, so eagerly did she drink in her cousin's words, so quickly did she see with his eyes. It was when their heads were bent together under the soft lamp-light, that Jared came to the door and took in the group for a moment unobserved. His face grew stern, and with a quick movement he turned away, but not without attracting the attention of those within the room.

“ Come in, Jared, will thee not, and enjoy these photographs with us ? ” Robin said promptly and cordially, hoping that Jared would meet her cousin for a few moments pleasantly, and thereby wipe out the mem-

ory of his rude manner upon their first meeting. But Jared was in no humor to be pleasant, and in no mood to endure the sight of the cousins together. He said abruptly :

“ Thanks, I have something else to do.” He turned on his heel and disappeared. He rushed out into the night, down the lane, and out the gate, caring little where he went, taking little heed of time. He muttered to himself as he went along, kicking at the stones in his path. No one of all the household, save Robin, knew that he did not enter the house again all through the short night ; and as she sat at her window and pondered over him, she felt a tender, sorrowing pity for the man who was so ungoverned and fierce. She felt instinctively that Jared was showing out his true self ; that while he had many generous, noble traits, they were more than counterbalanced by his moody, savage tempers. He was a man who, though he should attain his heart’s desire, would ever be at times a prey to his own undisciplined nature ; and she wondered how it was all to end.

During the days which followed, Dick came daily to Airlie. Sometimes he saw his cousin ; oftener he did not. She was almost always out on the farm, where he would not seek her, for he could not bear the sight of her toiling through harvest. Many a day he would fain have thrown off his coat and have plunged into the work by her side. When at last July came to an end, and harvest and threshing were finally over, there went from his heart a fervent “ thank God ! ”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FOX HUNT.

DURING August Standish arrived at Ivanwold, and the neighborhood awakened to life. The heaviest work of the year being over, the time for recreation and leisure was at hand. The coming home of Dick Elgar after years of absence was a spur to every one, and not a place in all Fenny Drayton but opened its doors during this leisure month in some hospitality. During the early days of September Captain Esten proposed to get up a hunt. He told marvellous tales of having sighted a fox several times down on the Manor, not far from Ivanwold. Dick therefore promptly invited all the young people of the neighborhood to a meet at Ivanwold, where breakfast would be served between eight and nine in the morning, and as the weather had been cool and damp a large turnout would be expected. Captain Esten was to be, of course, master of the hounds. After full arrangements had been made, Dick went to Airlie to see what horses his cousin had that were available. He told her of the arrangements and the hunt breakfast, then he asked :

"What horse will you ride, Robin?"

"Dick, I have never hunted since father's death, and I feel as if I never cared to again."

"Robin, my little cousin," Dick said gently, "you must go to this hunt; you must not give up to any morbid feeling. There is no one who would be as grieved over your abandonment of hunting as Uncle Gilbert himself. And, further, you will not utterly slight the first gathering of my home-coming, will you?" It was only by a supreme effort that he could keep within the bounds of prudence; the cousinly footing was very slippery ground to Dick. But Robin, not entirely unaware of an undercurrent of feeling in her cousin's words, replied gravely, after a moment of consideration:

"No, Dick, I will not slight thy home-coming. As thee says, father would be the first to bid me go."

"And, Robin, of course I expect Comly to come too; will you have mounts enough?"

"Yes; Jared has his own horse, and I shall ride the young bay."

"Will it be well to ride a young horse untried in hunting?"

"It will be perfectly safe; he may get a bit excited among so many horses, and he has never done much jumping, but I wish to sell him. This will be an opportunity to see what there is in him."

"Why not ride Comanche?" Dick persisted.

Robin understood that her cousin was uneasy for her safety.

"Comanche is a little lame, and I would not take him out on such a jaunt. Thee need not fear the bay ; I am not inexperienced, and though he has never been tried on such an occasion, he readily obeys my lightest wish. I broke him myself ; and besides, Dick, thee must not forget our fox-hunting here in Maryland is not like fox-hunting in England. There they largely hunt bagged foxes, which rarely escape ; they make a dash of several miles over fences, stone-walls and streams, and there are usually a brush and pads to be had for the few in at the death. We, on the contrary, often ride a whole afternoon, or half a night, without unearthing a fox. We have more long, hard riding to do than high or dangerous jumping, and many do not follow the hounds at all, save where they lead through fields and gates. Some of the more adventurous among us take the fences and ditches as they come, but nothing is thought if, instead of jumping, the top rails are thrown off or a circuit made. Nowadays the foxes are so scarce that I fancy the hunt will be very tame."

The morning of the hunt came, and with it the traditional hunting weather : a southerly wind and a cloudy sky. Ivanwold was soon alive with carriages and riders. Dick was impatiently awaiting his cousin's arrival. Breakfast was nearly over before she appeared. She came trotting up on the young horse and Dick thought he had never seen so lovely a woman. He noted with quick, fastidious eyes the firm seat, the light hand, and

her grace and ease in the saddle. He hastened towards her to help her dismount, but she shook her head in token that she would not get down.

“But, Robin, you have had no breakfast.”

“Oh! I breakfasted long ago, at sunrise; but if thee chooses, I will take some coffee.”

Dick brought a cup with his own hands and stood beside her, while she, with the bridle over her arm, drank it. Then came the call to mount. It was found that only about twenty-four would really follow the hounds, with but a light sprinkling of the young women of the neighborhood. Harmony was among them, with both Standish and Thaddy very attentive in the matter of tightening saddle-girths. Dick, as host, had to be everywhere at once, helping to mount the ladies of the party. Jared held himself aloof, with his eyes bent upon the rider of the bay horse. Robin kept back out of the crowd of horses; the colt showed unmistakable signs of excitement, and as each of the party crossed the lawn and swept by him, he began to back and whirl about in the middle of the drive-way, making the gravel fly in all directions. He refused to follow the others. Robin was bending forward, trying to quiet him with hand and voice, but he laid his ears back and was deaf to her tones. She spoke to him commandingly, and it was evident that the temper of both horse and rider was up. Jared came forward and begged her to dismount, but this she refused. Then he said :

"Let me take him by the bridle and lead him?"

"Stand off, Jared, I shall give him the whip in a moment."

True to her words, she struck him sharply over the neck with her crop. He reared for an instant, then with a bound was off like a shot, in among the riders who scattered to right and left before him. Then, with ears laid back and body stretched to full length, he was out of the gate and out of sight, with Dick, Jared and several others in terrified pursuit.

Robin knew that the horse had bolted ; that she was in for a dangerous ride, perhaps a ride for her life. After the first shock of excitement and fright swept over her, she said to herself that she must keep cool, she must not lose her head, she must keep a firm, steady rein. As they bounded along, with trees and fences scarcely distinguishable, she began to feel an unaccountable exhilaration and exultation in the motion of the running horse. She felt that, unless they encountered something in the road, her chances might be good for a safe ending to the mad ride. The thought flashed through her mind that she had boasted to Dick that the horse obeyed her lightest wish ; she felt that he would have little opinion of her skill in breaking a horse or her judgment in rousing his temper at a critical moment ; but she knew that this same thing might have happened to any one, no matter how skilled in horsemanship. It would probably cost her the sale of the animal. Then there rushed

through her mind queer recollections of past things, trivial doings and sayings of years ago. She felt that she had been riding for hours, and she wondered if the hunters had gone on ; she hoped so. She knew that she was close upon a fork in the road ; she hoped the horse would take the broader, safer way. She made a steady, strong pull upon the rein. To her surprise, he turned into the smooth, open road, but kept on in his wild rush. Not a wagon nor a person was to be seen as far as eye could reach, and she wondered what the end would be. Another mile flew by, and she thought she noticed a faint slackening of the pace.

Then for the first time Robin felt she might perhaps gain his attention. She spoke to him ; she called him by name ; she coaxed him in the old, tender way he knew so well. For a few moments he seemed not to hear, but gradually his ears, which had lain so close to his head, pricked up and straightened themselves, and Robin knew that he heard and recognized her voice at last ; that the time was not far off when she should have full control. He gradually came down from the maddened run to a more moderate gait, and when he finally felt the touch of her hand upon his neck the fright and temper left him, and the danger was over.

Robin saw that she was several miles from Ivanwold ; that she had lost the hunt altogether, and that she must retrace her steps. The panting horse was submissive enough now. He turned readily back upon the road

which he had just been rushing over a moment before, and after they had slowly retraced nearly a mile of the way, Robin heard the regular pounding of horses' hoofs approaching. She knew that it was some one in pursuit. She halted at one side of the road and waited the coming of the rider who was thundering over the pike in as headlong a fashion as she had done a moment ago.

It was Dick, his horse in a foam, his face set and pale. He threw himself out of the saddle, and as his eyes took in the fact that she was safe and unhurt he said, fervently :

"Thank God ! you are safe. Oh ! my little cousin, how you must have suffered during that headlong ride. At every step of the way I feared to see you lying by the roadside." And he put up his hand to shut out the imaginary picture.

"I was not so very much frightened, Dick, but I thought of every thing under the sun that I have ever said or done for years ; and I confess that both the horse and I are a trifle spent."

"Let me put you on your feet for a few minutes, Robin."

He lifted her down and kept his arm about her to steady her for a moment. She found herself a little more upset than she had fancied, and for a short time leaned against Dick's arm ; but soon gathering herself together she declared that she was ready and able to mount again and join the hunters.

"Dick, I am so sorry to have spoiled the beginning of the day and for having kept thee from the hunt."

"What is the hunt to me, Robin, when I have you safe, unhurt, and near me?" he exclaimed impetuously, with a ring in his voice which sent a tremor through Robin that the wild ride had not produced. Other and still more impetuous words sprang to his lips, but he resolutely held them back and continued in a grave way :

"Comly is somewhere on the pike looking for you too. He took the other road at the fork, for we could not be certain which road the horse would take. But, my cousin, I never saw a more splendid exhibition of nerve and coolness in my life than you have displayed."

"Thank thee, Dick," she answered quietly, but a faint flush came to her face at the words of praise. She felt that there was more danger ahead than there had been in the wild ride. She hastened to put an end to it :

"Come, Dick, we must push on and not keep the others any longer."

"You are sure you are not nervous about mounting again?" he anxiously asked.

"I am not at all nervous. I am willing to prophesy that this is the first and last runaway the bay horse will ever be guilty of."

"He is a splendid, powerful animal, but he is a trifle too big and heavy for you, cousin."

"Yes, I know it ; I am not going to keep him, I cannot afford it."

As they rode along slowly, side by side, Dick said carelessly : " I am looking for such a horse ; will you sell him ? "

Robin glanced suspiciously at him, as she asked :

" Would thee wish to buy a horse that bolted as he has done to-day ? "

" Why not ? It counts very little with me. He was frightened and excited ; he did not run through viciousness. I will give you five hundred dollars for him," he said boldly.

A smile broke over Robin's face. She looked at her cousin and said amusedly :

" Ah, Dick, thee has over-reached thyself ; the colt is not worth five hundred, and thee knows it. Thee only wishes to buy because I wish to sell. Thee cannot have him," and she patted the neck of the horse as she spoke. Dick turned in his saddle and said with some heat : " On my honor, cousin, I want to buy a horse for hunting ; the horses I brought from town were mostly for driving. I will pay you any price you may fix upon him."

There was silence for a few moments. Robin was perplexed. Here was a chance for a little ready money ; she desired to sell the horse, but she felt convinced that Dick only wished to buy as a means of helping her. She felt, however, that she could not let any false pride stand in the way for her mother's sake, so she said in a subdued tone :

"Well, Dick, I had hoped to sell him for two hundred and fifty or three hundred dollars, but scarcely anybody would give that who saw his behavior to-day. I will take two hundred for him."

"I will give you three hundred, your full price, cousin ; he is worth every bit of it. I 'd like to offer another hundred ; I owe it to him for not throwing you. I will make out a check for the amount, and will send a groom for the horse any time you may name. But here comes one of my men from Ivanwold in pursuit of you. I think I 'd better send him to look up Comly and tell him you are all right ; then we will return home."

Just then the ringing sound of the hounds in full cry broke upon their ears.

"Listen, they 've started a fox, they are in full pursuit," exclaimed the girl excitedly. "Come, Dick, let us enter the woods here ; they are only about half a mile away, we can come across them by making a cut through here."

And she turned into the woods with a backward glance at Dick, who followed her nothing loath.

Meanwhile, after Robin had shot out of sight and left the party on the lawn in consternation, they had huddled together waiting the result, expecting the return of one of the men ; but as time went on and no one came back, Captain Esten decided that they had better move on in the direction which the runaway had taken ; no good could be done by staying on the lawn, and they might perhaps

more quickly learn the result. Robin's skill and nerve as a horsewoman were well known, and while the Captain was nervous for her welfare he had little doubt that she would come back safe and sound. They started off in subdued order, only the dogs showing any impatience. Part of their way lay through scrubby oak woods. When they were on the point of emerging upon the pike again, Captain Esten said :

"See here, I'm going to propose that instead of going back to the pike we continue through this wood ; we are not far out of reach if the men return with the runaway, and it is not very far from here where I have twice seen a fox in the last two weeks."

The love of the huntsman was fast overcoming the Captain's anxiety. He believed in taking things as they came, and he knew pretty well that a fox had a burrow somewhere in this same wood. Of course Robin was all right, and it was a pity to lose the chance. Suddenly, while he was arguing, the whole pack of hounds went off in full cry on a hot scent. The runaway was forgotten, all idea of returning to the road was abandoned, and the chase began. The hunters pounded and tore through the woods, over logs and brooks, with no break in the tonguing of the hounds ; then out across fields of springy turf, over hedges and ditches, pell-mell in great haste they went. Then the fox doubled, and the whole was to go over again.

At last Dick and Robin emerged from the woods, just as the hounds were again in full cry, and joined the

flyiug hunters, who had time only to wave their hands in token of relief and greeting at the safe appearance of the girl. A little later Jared too appeared. For the rest of the time the bay horse behaved splendidly ; sometimes he showed a tendency to lose his head, but the rider, with her firm hand and voice, never lost control. Not for an instant while the hunt lasted did Dick leave her side. Little did he care about the scent lying well, or whether there were any scent at all ; his pleasure was in noting the changing expression upon his cousin's face, and his only concern was in her disappointment when it was finally declared that the "game was up." As Robin had predicted, the hunt was for naught ; no brush nor pads were to be had that day. After Robin and Dick had joined the hunt the run had been hot and exciting, with only occasional breaks. Finally Reynard had doubled just when the hounds were almost upon him, and the ringing pack was silent, only to rise again in full cry a moment later ; then fox, dogs and hunters came to the river, the fox disappeared, the hounds plunged into the rather shallow stream, and when they emerged on the opposite bank the scent could not be picked up. With noses to the ground they ran hither and thither up and down the bank, but fruitlessly ; Reynard had got away. The woods and fields about were scoured and beaten in vain. Captain Esten wound the horn and called in the pack.

It was late in the afternoon when the return home set in. The Captain was loud in his lamentations, and

grumblingly declared that "the dogs were n't worth a damn ; that they did n't know the scent of a fox : and he 'd bet his head that some of the darkies had been coon-hunting with them." It was not until the whole party had promised to ride up to The Hatch and have a light supper that the Captain was restored to good-nature.

Robin was questioned eagerly by different ones of the party as to how she felt when she realized that her horse was running away, what she had thought about, and whether she had been frightened ; and as they clattered along every one had some personal experience of the same sort to relate. Jared finally rode at her side, and as he joined her he said :

"Thee gave us a fine fright this morning, Robin ; if thee had not lost thy temper and given the horse the whip he would not have bolted."

"Perhaps not, Jared ; but had thee been in my place I am certain that thee would have given him not only the whip but the spur too."

And in her mind Robin contrasted the two men. No matter what Dick had thought, he had found no fault ; he had only remembered that she had been in peril, and he had found a word of praise for her nerve, while Jared had only words of reproof for her. She thought how singularly shortsighted it was in a man to try to win a woman by such a method. She felt in her heart, however, that Jared's words were true ; she ought never to

have struck the young horse ; he was ignorant and excited at the time, and she had only roused his temper. Quick to acknowledge the error, she said :

“ Jared, thee is right ; I ought not to have struck him at all. I really think, however, that he would have given me trouble sooner or later ; I thought he meant mischief from the start.”

“ I hope it won't confirm him in running away. Thee will not find a ready sale for him, but it only goes to show that women have no business to meddle with what is so obviously out of their sphere. It stands to reason they don't know how to handle horses ; they invariably ruin the animal when they don't break their own necks,” Jared said in a surly tone. A quick wave of anger swept over Robin's face. Was it for this man, and men like him, to mark the lines between which women's feet should tread ? She said coldly :

“ Thee need not trouble thyself about the sale of the horse ; before we left the hunting-field to-day he was already sold.”

“ Indeed ! may I ask who the gallant purchaser was who would buy a horse upon the heels of a runaway ?” Jared asked sneeringly.

“ My cousin,” she said quietly.

“ Of course, I might have known that no one but thy cousin would throw away money on a runaway horse. I suppose the inducement to him is in thy having broken and trained the animal.”

Two bright spots burned in Robin's cheeks, but she would not notice the sneer and insulting tone of Jared's words.

"Oh, well, Jared," she said coolly, "every one is not so wary and cautious as thee. Dick is not afraid of runaway horses, he rather likes them. He is a very daring horseman."

Jared turned a dull leaden hue. "Does thee mean that I am a coward?" he said, in a tone of rising anger, and turning fiercely towards her in his saddle.

"Yes, I mean thee is a coward, just that," she said, looking him in the eyes.

"When have I ever shown myself less courageous than thy cousin?" he asked in suppressed rage.

"Thee shows thyself a coward now to vent thy temper and sneers continually upon a woman, who has not the power to resent them as a man would do. Thee knows that I have one way of freeing myself from them, but thee knows also that I am not likely to resort to it; and thee takes advantage of it. Now I ask if that is not cowardly?"

She waited a moment, but Jared did not reply. His face was white, and the veins stood out in his forehead. He understood that Robin meant that she could free herself from him by dismissing him like any other of her laborers. It was the second time she had warned him of it since he had lived at Airlie, and he knew he had brought it upon himself; but he was in too great a pas-

sion of anger and despair at himself and at her to make any rejoinder. There was silence for a brief time ; then Robin's heart smote her for her sudden outburst. She knew so well what was in Jared's heart, and what had spurred him on to be rough and sneering. She said gently :

"Jared, forgive me for speaking in such temper. I cannot forget thy kindness to mother and me all these months."

She paused a moment, and held out her hand. Jared did not take it, but nodded his head with a quick jerk, in token that he accepted her *amende*. With a slight color in her cheek, Robin continued :

"It is hard for me to realize, Jared, that thee in thy sneering moods is the same man who first came to Airlie, and who was so gentle towards mother and me." She was silent a moment, but Jared's face was flint.

Just then Thaddy rode up.

"What 's the row? You two 've been waggin' your heads at each other for two miles ; I 've been watchin' from behin'."

"You should have come sooner, Watkins ; you 've missed an eloquent lecture upon courage," Jared said, with a glitter in his eyes.

"I don' won'er, Comly, after the pluck Miss Rob showed this mornin'."

"Oh, she was not dwelling on her own remarkable prowess of this morning, but upon manly courage as exemplified by her cousin," he recklessly said.

Robin gave him a keen, stern glance ; then addressing herself to Thaddy, she said :

“ I think I will fall back and wait for Harmony.”

“ Don’ do it, Miss Rob ; Stan’ish mos’ as good as tol’ me in so many words jus’ now to get out.”

The two men rode on, and Robin halted in the road till the others came up. Then they all rode slowly towards The Hatch. Dick quickly noted the strange look upon his cousin’s face, and exclaimed :

“ You are worn out, my cousin ; let me take you straight to Airlie, instead of stopping with the rest” ; and Dick checked his horse.

As he spoke, there came back to Robin the memory of the time when as a child she had told Deborah confidently that she thought Dick and Adsum “ the two nicest people ” she knew. And she felt, as she looked into her cousin’s grave and anxious face, that, while she should scarcely put it that way to-day, still the child’s opinion of years ago was but the far-away intimation of the woman’s.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FOOL'S MANOR.

FOR the few days succeeding the hunt Robin avoided Jared. The color mounted to her face every time she recalled the sneer in his tone and manner when he had spoken of her cousin. She felt that she had borne from him more than her dignity would allow, and that the time was at hand for taking steps to end the situation. Jared himself had spent little time with them lately. He scarcely ever came to his meals, and when he did he maintained an unbroken silence. There was a marked change in him, and beyond the barest civilities no word passed between the two young people. There was a sort of defiance about him which even Dorothea noticed, and with her ever sweet, womanly tact she had tried to win him to pleasanter manner and speech, but in vain. At last one day she said to her daughter :

“Robin, what is to be done about Jared ? he distresses me ; there is a recklessness and a rudeness about him for which I cannot understand the reason. Thee has not rejected him ?”

"No, mother, he has given me no chance, and I am sure now he never will ; but I am not disposed to tolerate him and his savage moods much longer. If he takes no steps himself, I shall be obliged to tell him he must leave Airlie."

"Well, Robin, I cannot blame thee. Jared surprises me very much. He has taken a queer, crooked turn somehow lately. He acts like a man who has a grudge. He did not use to be so, and I do not understand him. I think in simple dignity to ourselves we cannot go on much longer as we are."

"I am glad thee feels that way, for I have had to bear a great deal from Jared, even to downright insolence."

But Robin did not repeat to her mother his rough remarks and sneers. She felt that she could not lower Jared in her mother's eyes, and that it was best to leave her in ignorance. Nor had she told her mother of the running away of the horse on the day of the hunt ; she knew it would be a needless worry to her.

At last, one day Jared abruptly announced that he should be away for a few days on business. He did not state where he was going, or when he should start, nor did any one on the place know when he went. He did not appear at breakfast one morning, and it was found that his horse was gone from the stable. It was the first time since he had come to Airlie that he had ever spent any length of time away, and the circumstance was noted by both women as unusual. Robin had a suspicion that

perhaps he did not mean to return at all, or that he was meditating going away for good ; for she remembered that years ago, when a half-grown boy, he had left his home suddenly and secretly, never returning till years afterwards, and then appearing as suddenly as he had gone. At the end of a week Jared returned quietly. No questions were asked and no information was volunteered upon his part as to where he had been or what he had been doing. He seemed to have recovered from his recent ill-temper, and although he was very grave there was no trace of sullenness. Dorothea was relieved ; she felt that the necessity for them to take any immediate steps towards change was removed, and she was disposed to forget his past strange behavior. Robin, however, was not relieved by this difference in manner. She had braced herself for a plain talk, in which she should tell him that there would have to be a different arrangement. She felt that she could not do so now, in the light of his change of base ; that the day for plain-speaking must be postponed.

Meanwhile the very end of September had come, and the summer weather still lingered. The young people of the neighborhood seemed fairly let loose in a round of amusements, and various were the tea-drinkings under the trees on old-fashioned lawns, picnics in the woods, and old-time contra-dances in the barns. For Friends though they were, they were thoroughly modernized, and they were more than all else true Marylanders, and

spent their leisure, like the planters in old Maryland days, in open-air amusements. The days were shortening perceptibly. The sun, which had been setting behind a clump of lilac bushes in the west lawn, was now shedding its rays through the branches of an elm tree further down. Tea was over. Harmony had been at Airlie all the afternoon, and was now sitting on the top step of the porch, leaning against a post which supported the railing. Robin was standing a few feet away watching the turkeys going solemnly to roost in the catalpa tree near the end of the porch. Adsum and Whack were both at hand, and Jared was on the porch smoking his evening pipe. Harmony suddenly exclaimed :

"Here come your cousin and Henry Standish, Robin."

The cart rattled loudly over the stones ; the dogs ran out and barked. Jared rose, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and prepared to go forward to greet the two men, much to Robin's surprise. In a moment they were all sitting on the steps, carelessly grouped in the fading light of the soft day. Dorothea had come out to her high-backed chair.

"Well, young people," she said, "what is on hand now? I have n't heard of any gayety for at least twenty-four hours."

"I think we have come to the end of our rope. I wish some one could suggest something new as a wind up," said Harmony, plaintively.

"By the way," said Dick, "I remember a queer

haunted old place somewhere in the adjoining county, which has been deserted for years and has an out-of-the-way name which I don't recall ; we might make up a party and go there one of these early moonlight nights. What do you say ? ”

“ Thee is thinking, Richard, of Fool's Manor, but it is too far away and over a bad road,” objected Dorothea.

“ What is Fool's Manor ? ” asked Standish.

“ Yes,” added Harmony, “ I never heard of such a place.”

“ Well,” explained Robin, “ it is a magnificent old manor-house standing weird and deserted in the midst of a dense wood, about twenty miles from here. It was built some seventy or eighty years ago. No one has ever lived in it. It is completely isolated, but is kept in perfect repair. It is said to be haunted, and there are all sorts of terrible tales told about it.”

“ Could we get in if we were to go ? ” asked Dick.

“ Yes, an old man and his wife live in the woods near by who take care of it ; they let people go into the house. But for some reason the whole region is shunned. It is said that those who are rash enough to visit Fool's Manor are invariably overtaken by misfortune.”

“ Why was it called by such a queer name ? ” asked Harmony.

“ Well, you see it was built by a woman, one of the Burnleys. Her father died and left her in his will only enough money to build a house, so out of revenge she

commenced this manor-house in the most inaccessible spot she could find, determining to make it cost as much as possible, the stone having to be hauled all the way from town. It is said to be magnificent. When it was done, of course there was no money left to clear the woods or to live upon, so there it stands to this day silent and empty, and gloomy beyond what one's fancy can paint."

"Does any one know the way?" There was silence for a moment; then Jared said:

"I know the way, I have been there."

"The very thing; let us go by all means. Let us start in the afternoon and come home in the evening, when the early moon rises," said Dick.

"But, Richard, I cannot let these girls go on such a jaunt with no married person with them."

"I'll make father go," said Harmony; "we can have our three-seated light-covered wagon, and let's have four horses."

"I will send up my horses. I have four which travel well together; I had them out yesterday," said Dick.

"I insist that Jared must drive," said Dorothea, "for the road is very steep and dangerous in some places, and he knows the way."

"Certainly, Comly must drive, that is if he will," said Dick, turning towards him.

"Of course," said Jared shortly.

"But Mr. Standish has n't spoken a word," said Harmony.

"Well, I could not get in a word ; but now that I am consulted, I will put in an application for the back seat of the wagon," he said, looking at Harmony.

"Certainly, you and father shall have the back seat together," she demurely said.

A few days later at The Hatch the wagon, with the curtains rolled up, was ready at the door. The light-hearted party was to start rather early in the afternoon. The weather was sultry, even oppressive, as it often is in early autumn. A hamper of luncheon was stowed away, then the Captain said :

"How are we to sit ?"

"Father, you are to sit on the back seat with Mr. Standish."

"Your grandmother !" ejaculated the Captain, and climbed to the front seat beside Jared, who already held the reins. After the Captain was seated he called out :

"Some of you just look and see if the lantern is hanging underneath the wagon."

"Yes, but we shan't want a lantern," said his daughter.

"I make it a rule never to go anywhere over these roads at night without one," said the Captain in explanation as they started off.

Jared was an expert in handling a four-in-hand, and they bowled over the ground making fast time. The first of the way led through Fenny Drayton and within a couple of miles of Ivanwold, then it branched

off and took them into an adjoining county, where the road began to be narrow and rough. It led through woods and over streams, and in several places the road was divided into two parts, a lower dirt or summer road, and some three or four feet above it a stony upper road, evidently to be used in bad weather when the rains made the lower way impassable. Each of the party was struck with the danger such a marked difference in the levels made, especially as upon the edge of the lower road the bank slipped away in a rather steep declivity.

"A ticklish road I should call this, hey, Jared?" said the Captain.

"You are not nervous about my driving, I hope?" he answered touchily.

"Bless me, no," the Captain good-humoredly replied.

When the sun was a couple of hours high, they left the main road and plunged into the narrow, winding way which led for a short mile through the wood which surrounded the old manor-house. They could see above the tree-tops the towers of the weird building just touched by the rays of the sun. They found the poor, meagre dwelling of the keepers of the strange place, which stood in a small clearing. They hitched their horses, and in return for a piece of silver received the keys of the building. Then the men of the party held back the thick branches of the trees and underbrush to make a way for the two girls to advance. Harmony kept close

to Robin, who was in front of her. She said in an undertone :

"What a gruesome place ; I wish we had n't come."

They threaded their way carefully, with a crackling of branches attending every step, and suddenly found themselves confronted by the grim, cold stones of the massive building, with the forest trees and undergrowth brushing against its very walls. They entered the imposing door, with suites of rooms opening from the grand hall within. Their footsteps echoed drearily and their voices were instinctively lowered to suit the hush that fell like a pall about them. All over the building they went, from room to room and hall to hall, gazing out of windows from which there was no view, only the trees of the forest stretching away upon all sides.

"Let us get out into the open air ; I feel as if I were in a living tomb," said Harmony, in a low voice.

She turned to descend. Robin lingered at one of the tower windows to trace out the road, which like a thread wound in and out of the wood below. She was thinking, somehow, of the old legend of Rosamond's bower in the labyrinth, and the kingly lover who could only find his way to and from by means of a thread he was always careful to unwind. She heard the steps of the others resounding distantly, as they made their way through the corridors and down the stairs. She turned to hurry after them, when she saw that Jared had also

remained and was standing in the doorway. She approached the door as if to go.

"Wait a moment," he said, and he put out his hand to detain her. There was a mingling of expressions upon his face ; his restless eyes were bent upon her with a fierce glow in them. His mouth was drawn in a stern, straight line, and there was a sound in his voice that made the girl nerve herself for the long-dreaded encounter. He gazed at her for a moment, then broke out suddenly and roughly :

"Robin, I can endure this hell no longer. I have been almost mad for months, and I must speak, though thee should drive me from thee. I love thee. I came long ago to Airlie solely because I loved thee, and if I go from thee, never to return, it will be because thee bids me."

Jared hurled out his words in a quick, defiant way. There was no tenderness in the voice, no tenderness in the eyes ; only a fierce passion burned in both. Then he went on, rather in a tone of demand than of entreaty :

"Robin, speak to me ; tell me the last few weeks have been forgotten, that thee will not cast my love from thee. I have given thee my all ; give me but a word in return."

He made a quick step forward and stretched out his arms towards her. Involuntarily Robin shrank back against the window. The movement was slight, but unmistakable. A change of expression swept over his face ; he became ashen, and the thin lips curled into

their sneering expression. His arms dropped to his side. He said, in a low, bitter tone :

“Thee need not speak, I understand. A woman who shrinks is not a woman who has any love for me, but only fear and dislike.” He made a move to go, then turned and came striding back to her side, his face aflame, and in a passionate voice cried :

“Has thee any idea of what this is to me? It is not only my love but my very life thee is depriving me of. Thee is casting me back upon my own dark and bitter thoughts; thoughts of which thee has no conception, thoughts that lead to deeds, deeds that make a man wander over God's earth an alien, an outcast.”

His voice had gradually risen to a high, excited pitch, and at his last words the color forsook Robin's cheek. She stepped forward, grasped his arm, and said quietly :

“Thee is talking like a madman.”

“Ay! a madman perhaps, but a man with the bitterness of death in his heart does not pick his words and attune them to cold, indifferent ears. How much does thee know or care what this is to me?”

“Jared, I would spare thee all of this if I could. I have tried for weeks to show thee that I could not give thee what thee asks.”

“Yes, thee has shown me this, by showing me the love of another man, by taunting me with cowardice,” he fiercely cried. Suddenly he bent his head and brought his face close to hers, and said entreatingly :

"Robin, take back the charge of cowardice ; tell me thee did not mean it ?"

"Jared, I took it back long ago. It was only a flash."

"Bid me stay, give me one word ; it is my life, my soul, I am pleading for," he continued, while hope sprang for a moment to his eyes.

"I cannot ! I cannot !" She looked at him pityingly. All the sneers and roughness were forgotten ; she thought only of the man offering the best gift in his possession.

He gazed at her fixedly. He read the truth in her pitying eyes, and turning away with a groan he threw out his right arm suddenly as if to encounter a foe, and struck the door-jamb with his clenched fist. Then he rushed from the room, and she heard his steps resound on the silent stairs and echo through the empty house. She turned back to the window, but she could no longer see the thread of road in the woods below, for her eyes were blinded by tears. She stood and watched the gathering gloom, till her name rang through the corridors below. They were looking for her. As she swiftly passed down the stairs, scarcely touching them as she went, she met her cousin at the foot. She feared that he would read in her face the emotion she was trying to repress. As she emerged into the faint light, Harmony exclaimed :

"Robin, you have seen something in that terrible place, what is it ?"

"Nonsense, Harmony, how imaginative you are," she replied.

"Where is Jared?" asked the Captain.

"He said something about looking to the horses a moment ago; I did not observe which way he went," said Dick.

"We had better have our supper, I think, and then get away from this place. It is a dismal hole. What on earth you wanted to come for I can't conceive," growled the Captain.

"Suppose we go to the wagon and have our supper? It is much less shut in, and we can have at least a few moments of daylight left us," suggested Dick.

The door of the old manor-house was swung to with a loud clang and locked, and the party threaded its way back to the carriage.

"Unless I am much mistaken, we shall have precious little moon to-night," said Captain Esten, pointing to masses of dark cloud which were slowly covering the faint, misty blue of the sky. They delivered the key to the dwellers of the hut and walked to the clearing a few paces away, where the horses stood and where an encouraging amount of daylight still lingered. There they found Jared.

"What a curious effect this half-light has on people," remarked Standish; "we all look as if we 'd seen goblins and ghosts. Comly is absolutely livid."

"All of our faces have a queer tint in this fading light,"

said Dick, cheerfully, trying to call attention from Jared. He felt certain that something of moment had happened to him ; for while the others had been looking round the outside of the house he had seen Jared rush out as if pursued and disappear into the woods. Then when he had gone in search of his cousin, whom he met at the foot of the stairs, there were unmistakable traces of tears on her face, and Dick said to himself : " It is all over for Comly, poor fellow ; we 're both in the same box." And he smiled to himself, but he knew that he did not mean to abide by the decision in his own case.

He threw himself into the task of rousing the spirits of the party ; he must divert the eyes of others from Jared, he must protect his cousin also from her share of suspicious glances. And while they ate their supper, sitting about upon the carriage cushions almost in the shadow of the weird building, never had Dick been so brilliant. He told one good story after another, until Standish caught the spark and waked from his indifference to tell droll experiences. But both were topped by the Captain, who, after a glass or two of wine, launched forth into his most cherished and most marvellous yarns, all of a very salty flavor, till the woods echoed with their gay laughter and jests.

All but Jared, who leaned with folded arms against the trunk of a tree, grim and mute. He ate nothing, and when he moved at all it was to drink repeatedly of the wine which was going the rounds.

At last a vivid flash of lightning, followed by the heavy roll of thunder, brought them all to their feet. The hamper was hurriedly packed away ; the curtains of the wagon were made ready to lower ; then they climbed to their places as before. The horses' heads were turned towards home, and they rolled away, leaving Fool's Manor to the gloom of the woods.

CHAPTER XXV.

OUTRIDING THE STORM.

IN spite of the blinding flashes of lightning which continually forked the sky, and the crash of peal after peal of thunder, the rain held off. The night was very sultry, and it had been unanimously decided not to lower the curtains of the wagon. Not a star was to be seen, much less did the moon lend her light, and black was the way. In spite of the threatening storm the young people kept up an incessant and bright flow of spirits ; the rattling pace of the horses, and the easy, swinging motion of the vehicle had an exhilarating effect, and they enjoyed spinning along through the dark night, trying to outride the storm. Fortunately the first miles of the way were over a broad, level dirt road, and Jared drove the horses at their full speed. He had been absorbed in his own dark and dreary thoughts ever since his rejection in the tower window. Every once in a while he let out his long whip, and a savage cut would fall upon the backs of the leaders. The horses would bound forward at the stroke of the whip, and the wagon would rock and sway from side to side. At last the Captain said :

"You drive as if the devil were after you, Comly ; you 'll have to haul in a bit when we come to the dangerous places ahead."

But the Captain received no word in return for his remonstrance. The speed of the horses was not abated. The young people behind began to flag in their talk, and finally the conversation languished altogether. Each one seemed to retire to his or her own thoughts. It was almost impossible to see an inch of the road. As they dashed along they could hear sometimes the splash of water as they plunged through some shallow stream, and when they turned the sudden curves that made part of the way almost serpentine in its course, they swayed and rocked from side to side till each one grasped the side or the back of the seat to keep from going out upon the road.

At last Robin started forward, in either alarm or indignation. Dick said in a low tone :

"You are nervous at Comly's reckless driving ; shall I take the reins ?"

"For Heaven's sake, no, Dick. Please do not say any thing ; I will speak if it becomes necessary."

But she did not speak ; she leaned back again in the gloom of her corner, shut her hands together resolutely, and waited. They dashed on for a few miles. The darkness seemed to grow more intense, until it was impossible to distinguish the outline of any one in the vehicle, save when a flash illumined their faces. Harmony,

as if to keep up her heart, began to sing from the back seat. Standish joined in, and their voices rose and fell, sometimes coming out loud and clear, then lost completely in the rolling thunder. They knew that they were near the place where the divided road began, which they had all remarked upon in the afternoon. Captain Esten turned to Dick and said over his shoulder, in a tone loud enough for all to hear :

“Don't you think we 'd better have the lantern ? no use tempting Providence, as I see, and Comly is as reckless as the devil.”

Jared did not appear to hear the Captain ; if he did he made no sign, but kept along at top speed. Dick rose up from his seat behind, and leaning over, said, in a cool, authoritative tone :

“See here, Comly, hold in your horses. The Captain and the ladies desire you to drive more carefully. We are approaching the dangerous places ; pull up, while I get out and light the lantern.”

But Dick spoke to deaf ears. Jared was perfectly rigid. He made no movement to pull in the horses. They were going down a rather steep incline at almost a run, and as a flash of lightning played around them for a moment Dick saw the road before them, the upper portion stony and narrow, the lower, some four feet below, broader but shelving off. He also saw, as he leaned over the seat, the expression on Jared's face. It was as if he were entirely oblivious of his surroundings ; as if he

neither heard the storm about him, saw the dangerous road ahead, nor heard the request just made. His look was that of a despairing, desperate man, who, absorbed by some fierce conflict within, was reckless and regardless of any danger that might threaten. It was clear to Dick that some strange, wild mood held Jared in its grasp. He wondered if it were possible the wine he had taken had maddened him in some unaccountable way. There was no time to lose. The horses must be pulled in or turned into the lower, safer road, if they were to escape an overturn. Dick towered up behind Jared with the impulse to wrench the reins from his grasp, but he knew it was already too late, that he would inevitably precipitate the very catastrophe which seemed to stare them in the face. He laid his hand in strong pressure upon Jared's shoulder, saying sternly : •

“For God's sake, Comly, look sharp ; take the lower road.”

All within the wagon heard the words and the warning of danger. Harmony's song died upon her lips. Robin put out her hand involuntarily towards her cousin, then withdrew it and braced herself against the back of her seat. A terrible silence fell upon them, and the darkness wrapped them about like a mantle. The wheels grated over the stones of the upper road, there was a moment of steadiness, then they turned a little upon the edge, there was a queer motion of uncertain level, then Standish said in a low, cool voice :

"By Jove, we 're done for."

Some one said : "Hush !"

The wagon made a lurch, partly righted itself, swayed again, and went crashing down upon the lower road. The horses made a struggle to keep their foothold, there was a straining and snapping of the harness, then they went down, plunging and struggling to break loose. There was not a sound from the wagon. The wind and thunder had died away for a moment, and all was still save for the movement and rattle among the horses. How long a time passed no one could ever tell afterwards, but at last Dick's voice rang out in the dark night :

"Robin, my cousin, where are you ?"

"Here, Dick," came her voice, clear and low.

"Are you hurt ?" he anxiously said, as he groped about for her.

"No, I think not much ; where are the rest ? Harmony ?" she called anxiously. There came a smothered, faint reply from the interior of the wagon.

"Get her out quickly, Dick." Dick stumbled against some one in his search. "Who is it ?" he asked.

"Hold on ; I don't know, I 'm seeing stars," Standish replied in a dazed, far-off voice. He had been thrown out from the back seat and was stunned for a moment. Just then a faint moan was heard. Standish was on his feet and exclaimed instantly :

"Harmony, are you hurt ?"

"No, but do get me out," she said faintly ; "the carriage seat is on top of me and I cannot move." There was a sob of fright in her voice, and in a trice the two men had her, weak and trembling, on her feet in the dark road.

"Where is father?" she asked with her first free breath.

"I'm over here in a bank of nettles, a bit bruised, but don't mind me," responded the Captain dolefully. Then Dick said again, as he put out his hand for his cousin, who winced when he touched her :

"Robin, you are hurt."

"No, Dick, not much ; look to the others ; the horses seem to be struggling, shall I go to their heads?" she asked. But Dick had hurried forward. He called back :

"Standish, feel about and try if you can find the lantern." As the wagon had fallen upon its side it was comparatively easy, by the aid of a lighted match, to find the place where it was fastened.

"Here's the lantern, and the glass even is not smashed." He quickly lighted it. Just then the moan again fell upon their ears, and Robin called out, in sudden memory, with fear in her voice :

"Where is Jared?"

"That's so, where is Comly?" said Standish.

"Comly, are you hurt? where are you?" anxiously called Dick ; but there was no response. The lantern was quickly flashed into the wagon, but Jared was

not there, and a mighty fear rose in all their hearts. Captain Esten had crawled out of the bed of nettles which had received him when he was thrown from the front seat. He was scratched and bruised, but he was on his feet, and spoke up with a groan :

"I am afraid Jared was thrown under the horses."

There was just an instant of horror at this suggestion, then without a word they turned to the poor creatures which seemed to be an inextricable mass of legs and harness. One of the leaders alone was standing, half up and half down the bank. Standish whipped out his knife and was about to cut him loose.

"Hold on, Standish, don't cut recklessly ; we shall have to get home to-night when this is all over," said Dick warningly.

In a moment both leaders were released unhurt. It was found also that a third horse was unhurt. He too was soon on his feet, but the fourth could not move, and from time to time moaned pitifully. There was no sign of Jared, and it was a relief to all not to come upon him lying crushed under the weight of the horses. Dick looked critically at the injured horse and said :

"Poor fellow, he is hopeless, his leg is crushed, he will have to be shot ; but where can Comly be ? he is not under the horses."

"He must have been thrown further off, perhaps down the bank," some one said.

Then they all made a careful search of every inch of ground. All down the bank they went, peering into

clumps of bushes, calling his name up and down from the lower to the upper road ; not an inch of ground but was carefully gone over, until it became certain that he was nowhere very near. The men put their hands to their lips and shouted again and again until the woods rang with "Comly !" "Comly !" echoed by the fainter cry of Robin's "Jared !" "Jared !" but not a sound came in response. After nearly an hour had been spent in fruitless search the Captain said :

"It is most unaccountable. He could not have been thrown much further than I, we both plunged together. He must be somewhere here,—unless——"and here the Captain paused. They all kept strangely silent for a moment, then the Captain said : "I think we had better make a move towards righting the wagon and getting the girls home ; they are used up."

"But what is to be done about Jared ?" Robin asked. There was a nameless horror in her mind which she wanted to shut out. She tried to believe that Jared was somewhere near, hurt, and in need of aid. The three men glanced at each other in the dim light of the lantern, and Robin knew a doubt had forced itself into their minds.

"Come, said Dick, "we must try to put the wagon on its wheels and put the horses to it in some way and go on. We will leave the ladies at Ivanwold and then come back with whatever men we can muster and make a thorough search for Comly ; of course," continued he, slowly and not looking at any of them as they huddled

together in the flickering light, "if he is lying anywhere in the woods hurt we shall find him."

"But how can it be possible for him to be hurt and we not have found him already?" asked Standish.

"You see," said Robin, hesitatingly and feeling that she must speak, "he might be hurt and yet be a good way out of the radius of our search, for he would be necessarily chagrined at upsetting us, and it has always been his way to go off by himself when any thing happens which he has been concerned in. I have known him to do so before."

The three men spoke apart in an undertone for a moment, then silently and with as much quickness as was possible they began to lift the wagon. Harmony held the lantern aloft, first with one arm, then with the other, Robin making no effort to relieve her, but standing aloof. Fortunately the wagon was little hurt and was soon standing in the road as if it had never been lying on its side. Then the horses were harnessed to it after a fashion, with a good many makeshifts and a deal of tying together of the harness. When at last all was ready, the Captain climbed stiffly to his seat as before, Standish took the place Jared had had, the girls were placed together behind, and Dick remained in the road with the lantern in his hand.

"Go on, Standish," he said.

"But, Mr. Elgar, are you not going with us; surely you are not going to stay in the woods?" exclaimed Harmony.

"I shall be with you in a moment, Miss Harmony."

Standish drove a distance, until the light of the lantern was lost ; then there rang through the night a quick succession of shots ; there was a start of fright from Harmony, but the others were all still. They knew that Dick had remained behind to put the crippled, moaning horse out of misery. Standish luckily had a revolver with him which Dick had borrowed for the purpose. He soon came forward and handed the lantern to the Captain. Standish gave up his place and went behind ; Dick took the reins and they began their homeward way. It was a slow drive ; the harness would not bear much strain, and one of the horses developed a lameness. The whole party was absolutely silent. Harmony slipped her hand into Robin's, but she could not see the look of pain that was continually on Robin's face ; and the rattle of the wheels drowned the quick, painfully-drawn breaths that rose in gasps every little while to her lips. Once when there was an unusual jolt Dick turned and asked anxiously :

"Did any one groan ?"

"I did not hear any one," Robin quickly answered ; then silence again fell among them. Each was going over the terrible experiences of the evening and it was too recent, too confused to talk about. They all had a feeling that perhaps they were closely treading upon the borders of tragedy. Certainly there was mystery somewhere, and if a tree rustled by the roadside each eye tried to pierce the darkness, each ear was strained to

catch a known voice ; no matter how curt or savage it might sound it would be welcome now. But no one emerged from the trees, no voice was heard. There was ringing through Robin's mind one refrain : " Deeds that make a man wander over God's earth, an alien, an out-cast." What had been in Jared's heart when he was driving so recklessly ? Had he meant to be deaf to Dick's warnings ? Had there been a purpose in the overthrow of the wagon ? " No," she cried to herself, " Jared was reckless in his pain, he was really oblivious of the danger, there was no murder in his heart." But then, " where is he ? was he killed in the fall, and hurled under some dark tree or into some bush which escaped our anxious eyes ? or did he crawl away after the crash, to make away with himself in the depths of the wood ? " These terrible, tormenting thoughts, together with a strange numbness which was creeping over her, made every thing a confusion. She dimly heard some one say :

" We are out of that horrible county at last, and only two miles from Ivanwold." She had little memory of the rest of the way, but at last they stopped, a door opened, a stream of light flooded across a porch, there was much running to and fro, some one lifted her to the porch, put her on her feet, and she walked into a brightly-lighted hall, where there seemed to be a great many people whom she saw dimly, as through a veil. Some one exclaimed :

" Robin is hurt, she is ill ; quick ! "

She remembered saying mechanically :

"Yes, my arm was broken in the fall."

Some one caught her in his arms ; was it Standish, or the Captain, or her cousin ? She did not know. It was Dick.

"My poor cousin, it was your moan I heard in the carriage, though you were so brave," he said tenderly as he lifted her and placed her on the sofa as though she were a child ; and not one in the room but guessed his secret.

When the wagon had driven up to the door at Ivanwold, although it was nearly midnight, Deborah had not gone to bed. The storm which had been gathering worried her ; she was uneasy for the party that was traveling over the rough, unfamiliar road in the face of such wind and lightning. When she heard the wheels she opened the door, almost before they stopped. She knew instantly that something had happened, for each face had a tale written upon it. After Robin had been brought out of the faintness which had seized upon her, Deborah roused the whole household. Servants and hands were hastily summoned. One of the men was sent to bring the doctor, and the others Dick ordered to make ready to return with him to the scene of the overthrow.

"How many lanterns can be mustered ?" he asked.

"We 've only two, Dick," Deborah said.

"Well, with the lantern we had with us we 'll have three. As I go through Fenny Drayton I will wake up

some one at the store and borrow some more. Captain, you are not to go, you look used up."

"Nonsense ; Dick Elgar, if you think I 'm going to stay behind just because of that spill, you are much mistaken. Have you any liquor?"

Dick produced decanters and glasses and each of the men took a stiff drink. Two fresh horses were put to the wagon. Four of the negroes of the place were to go along, mounted on the work-horses. As they were ready to start Dick went back for a moment to his cousin. She had recovered entirely from the faintness and was pacing to and fro, too distraught with pain to be able to wait calmly the coming of the doctor. Dick walked up and down by her side. He wondered to himself if there were any end to the pluck and endurance this woman possessed.

"Are you in terrible pain, Robin?"

"Yes, Dick."

"I wish I could be here when the arm is set. To think that you of all people should be hurt, while I, of course, must needs light on my feet without a scratch."

"Never mind me, Dick ; only be sure to search carefully for Jared. The thoughts in my mind are horrible."

"Tell me, Robin, do you really think he is anywhere in the woods at this time?"

"Dick, Jared was in a peculiarly reckless mood to-night ; it was the mood that sometimes leads to suicide."

Robin looked at Dick gravely, then she continued : "He may have been badly hurt and may have dragged himself out of our reach. He is very strange sometimes, and I have grave fears about him."

Dick gazed at her intently. He knew so well that she was tormenting herself, that she was holding herself responsible for Jared's strange disappearance ; and perhaps, woman-like in her fears for his safety, in her pity for him, she was nearer than she knew to the feeling which pity is akin to. He said quietly :

"We will make thorough search for him, but it will be in vain I think. I do not share your fears." He did not say that his suspicions were that Jared had slipped away through the woods in the darkness of the night never to return. A stern look settled on his face, as he walked in silence for a moment longer at his cousin's side. Then the Captain called to him that they were waiting for him, and reluctantly he left her, a prey to the torturing pain of her arm and the not less torturing thoughts of Jared's fate.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NIGHT AT IVANWOLD.

THE hours which followed the departure of the search party dragged slowly for the women who stayed behind. Deborah and Harmony hovered about Robin and were in deep distress to witness the pain, the evidence of which it was beyond the girl to suppress. It seemed as if the doctor would never come. Deborah went to the porch every now and then to listen for the sound of wheels. She had long ago cut away the sleeve from the broken arm and put upon Robin something cool and flowing. There was finally nothing to do but await the doctor's coming with what patience they could command. Harmony had told her every circumstance of the overturn, from the beginning of Jared's reckless driving down to the strange fact that they could not find him afterwards.

"What do you suppose it means, Miss Deb?"

"I do not know. I feel certain that the overturn was an accident. I wish I felt as certain that Jared would be brought back to-night."

Robin volunteered no word. She paced back and forth, when the pain was unendurable, with Jared's face staring from every corner of the room ; she felt with a shudder that she was the direct cause of the evening's catastrophe, that but for the conversation in the tower window all would have been well. But how else, she asked herself, could she have answered him ? how could she hold herself responsible for his fierce mood and its consequences ? Her mind ran back over the months he had been at Airlie. She remembered his sullen and often violent tempers over any thing that went wrong, and how he had sometimes recklessly left the house and gone off, no one knew where, when some special thing had disturbed or angered him. At last Deborah said :

" Here 's the doctor, I see his gig-lamps." She came in from the porch where she had been watching, went to a closet near by, drew from it various bundles of linen which she thought might be needed, and put them where they would be handy. Then she said :

" Harmony, I do not think thee is fit to stay here with Robin after all this excitement ; thee looks ill thyself, child. Do thee go up to my room till it is over."

" No, no, Miss Deb. I 'll not make any bother, and I may be useful."

The setting of broken bones is never a painless operation under the best of circumstances, but when hours have elapsed between the breaking and the setting then the operation is often an agony. Such it proved to

Robin ; she set her teeth together and tried hard to make no moan, but her face was drawn and pale. Away down in her heart, unguessed by any one, was the childish thought that she could bear it better if she could see her mother's face and hear her mother's gentle voice. Not for worlds would she let any one know how near she was to breaking down. At last it was over. Deborah and Harmony helped to lay her in the old, high-posted bed where as a child she had had dreams of breaking a colt like her Cousin Dick. She felt thankful that she had told her mother when they started off in the afternoon that she should stay with Harmony that night. She only wished that she could keep the broken arm entirely from her, but there was no hiding it as she had hidden the running away of the bay horse. How long ago every thing seemed and how queer it was to be again sleeping at Ivanwold, with Deborah fussing about the room and Harmony sitting at the window. At last Deborah said, softly :

"Come, Harmony, thee must go to bed now, it is two o'clock and thee will be ill. I cannot have two sick people on my hands, and I warrant thee 'll be stiff enough to-morrow. The doctor is going to stay till the men come back, for he might be needed ; so thee must go and get some sleep." Deborah did not often use "thee" to any one outside the community of Friends. Harmony noticed it, and felt it a special mark of favor and solicitude.

"Miss Deb, I wish you 'd always say 'thee' to me, it is so pretty; I have tried to have Robin do so too, but she says it would not be natural. Somehow I always feel an outsider in this dear old neighborhood."

"Why, my dear child, I will always hereafter say 'thee.' We cannot let thee feel an outsider. But thee is not taking thyself off to bed." She gently led Harmony away and left Robin in possession of the half-darkened room.

Deborah and the doctor sat and talked through the trying moments of waiting, expecting every instant the return of the party. Deborah had a substantial lunch set out upon the table and kept the kettle boiling, for she knew that when they came back they would be tired and hungry. Every once in a while she went softly to the room to see that Robin was wanting for nothing. She came back after one of these visitations saying :

"Robin has fever and is talking; can't thee give her something, doctor?" They proceeded to the room. Robin was tossing about and talking continually. The doctor mixed something quickly in a glass and approached her. She tried to push away the glass, muttering :

"No, Dick, we cannot take it; mother and I are too proud." Then there were broken, disjointed sentences, in which could be distinguished "mortgage," "payment." The doctor turned sharply to Deborah and asked :

"Does thee know whether Robin has had any worry on her mind lately?"

"I don't know positively; she never talks of her affairs. There are no money worries, save the old ones at Airlie, that I know of; but it is a heavy load for a girl to carry, and she works too hard." Then sinking her voice she said: "I am sure, doctor, that she has had trouble lately with Jared Comly, and that she has been worried about his conduct."

There was silence, during which the doctor watched the flushed face and counted the pulsations. Deborah asked finally:

"Does thee think she is going to be ill?"

"No, I think not; the excitement and fright of the accident to-night, together with the delay in setting the broken arm, are sufficient to cause the fever. She will be all right, I trust, in the morning."

Close upon four o'clock there was a sound of wheels. Deborah opened the door a second time that night to the returning party. She peered anxiously at each man as he jumped down from the wagon, and when she saw only those who had gone forth, she said to Dick:

"Thee has not found him?"

"No," said Dick, shortly.

"What has become of him? does thee think it possible he has made away with himself?" she asked.

"No," said Captain Esten, "I don't think he's made away with himself; it is as plain as possible that he's cleared out."

"What object would he have in clearing out?" persisted Deborah.

"Hanged if I know; he was always a queer, sulky devil," the Captain said bluntly.

Standish did not speak, and Dick looked stern. All three had an air of weariness and disgust.

"Come in," said Deborah, "and have something hot; you all look tired to death."

Dick asked as soon as they were in the dining-room:

"How is my cousin?"

"She stood the setting very well; it proves a simple fracture, and the doctor thinks there will be little trouble, but she is very restless, and has some fever."

"Where is she?" asked Dick, looking anxiously about, as if he had expected to see her somewhere near.

"Why, she's been put to bed, of course, in the old nursery, where she used to sleep. She has been a bit delirious, and has muttered about 'mortgages' and 'payments.'"

This repetition of Robin's fevered words made Dick's face darken. He made a quick, involuntary movement towards the door; then he remembered that though she was lying maimed and delirious under his own roof, a victim of Comly's brutal driving, he could not do any thing; he could not be near her even. Truly, he said to himself, his experiences had come thick and fast upon him since his return to America. But he was host, and he must remember the comfort of the others. He turned to Deborah and said;

"I hope Miss Esten was none the worse for the night's adventure, and that she has been made comfortable?"

"Oh, yes, Dick, Harmony is all right. As for Robin, the doctor is with her, and will stay till daylight."

Reassured, Dick turned to the two men:

"Captain Esten, you and Standish had better turn in for several hours; we shall all feel the better for sleep, I fancy."

"We shall all be rather a stiff lot to-morrow," said Standish; "the Captain seems to have the most scratches, but I've smashed my watch completely, and I'm hanged if I don't believe I have as bad an arm as Miss Elgar."

Here Standish pulled off his coat, turned up his shirt-sleeve, and revealed the sleeve of his undervest matted to the arm in blood.

"Man alive! why did n't you tell some one? Why have you gone all these hours with it in such a condition? And it is the left arm, too, like Robin's," said Deborah.

"Well, Miss Deborah, I could n't show less courage than Miss Elgar, could I? Her injury is worse than mine, for my arm is only bruised. You see, she and I sat on the same side of the wagon, and were the first to strike the ground, and if you will get me some hot water I'll try to soak off this sleeve."

"Standish, you must have the doctor look at your arm; it may be worse than you think," said Dick.

The doctor soon had Standish in charge. The arm proved to be very badly bruised, and had to be bandaged

almost as carefully as Robin's. When the doctor had finished, Deborah said :

"Has any one else any breaks or bruises hidden away? If not, I move that the household go to bed."

Dick went up with the Captain and Standish. They stopped a few moments in Dick's sitting-room to have a few words in a low tone. Dick said :

"I don't like the look of the thing at all, but we have done all we can in the matter."

"Of course," said the Captain. "It stands to reason that if Comly had been hurt we should have found him in our first search. I did n't think it worth while even to go back again to the place of the overthrow, and would have said so, but for Robin's suggestion that he might have done violence to himself. But there can be no doubt now that he 's slunk off through the woods somewhere, and it is a confoundedly low thing to do. I 'll never hold out my hand to him again," said the Captain, indignantly. Clearly, from the faces of the other two, they echoed his vigorous words.

It was late the next day before the household assembled. When the different guests who had slept at Ivanwold made their appearance, and looked each other over, it was with silent thanksgiving that things were no worse. The clear light of the September morning had brought out bruises and scratches innumerable, and not one of them but would bear some mark of the night's adventure for many days. Standish had his arm in a sling.

The Captain's ruddy face was scratched and bruised. Harmony was stiff from head to foot, and bore the mark of the carriage-seat, which had held her as in a vise. Dick alone, save for a scratch or two, seemed to be the one unscathed of the party. Robin was the one upon whom Jared's recklessness had fallen most heavily. Towards morning she fell into a deep sleep. At daylight the doctor went. Deborah and Harmony, as they went down-stairs at different hours in the morning, had looked in upon her, and had found her still sleeping.

When breakfast was nearly over, and while every one was going over the scene of the night before and all trying to talk at once, the door slowly opened and Robin came languidly into the room. It was evident that she could scarcely stand. Each man sprang to his feet to offer assistance. She smiled faintly and said :

"I am not so badly off as to need all of you," and she sank into an arm-chair. Her eyes took in the group quickly. She turned to Dick and said :

"Thee did not find him ?"

"No, dear cousin, we made a search of miles, but in vain," Dick gently replied. Then Robin looked again at the others. She noticed the bruises, and said quickly to Standish :

"Oh, Mr. Standish, I am so sorry you have your arm in a sling ; we are twins in misery." She glanced at her own arm resting in its splint.

"Mine is only a bruise, Miss Robin, but you ought not to have come down."

"No, indeed, thee ought not," said Deborah, quickly.

"Who dressed thee, and where did thee get that rig thee has on?"

"Why, cousin, I called to the housemaid who was in the passage—she helped me; but I could not wear my own gown, so she hunted out this old flowered thing from the press. I was so anxious to know if Jared had been found, but I confess I am very miserable and weak."

Dick brought a cup of coffee to her chair. He held the saucer while she took the cup with her one hand. She looked up at him, trying to smile lightly and cheerfully.

"Dick, it does not taste quite so good as the cup thee held for me at the hunt."

Dick looked down at her and did not trust himself to speak. He felt that it would not be well for Comly to come in his way very soon. Deborah came to Robin's side and laid her hand on her forehead, saying:

"Thee still has fever, thee must go back to bed at once; I never dreamed of thee coming down-stairs to-day."

"Thee is very good, dear Deborah, but I am going home immediately."

"Thee will do nothing of the sort," she replied, authoritatively.

"I think, Robin," said the Captain, "you had better stay here for a day or two, or at least until you are better able to stand a ride of five miles."

Robin turned her eyes appealingly to Dick. She was

too weak and weary in mind and body to argue or persuade. Dick saw the look in her eyes, and said quietly, in a tone of decision :

"It shall be as you wish, Robin, you shall go home. I will take you in the brougham." She gave him a grateful glance.

"But, Dick, thee has no business to encourage her in any thing so foolish as to jolt over that road, weak and spent as she is with fever and a broken arm."

"There shall be no jolting, Deborah, and it will be no worse for her than to stay here against her wishes," replied he, firmly. Then he rang and ordered the carriage to be brought round.

Meantime the Captain went out to see in what condition the wagon was. He came back and said :

"Come, daughter, get on your things, it is after eleven o'clock and we must be getting home. Elgar, if you hear any thing of Comly let us know. Of course by this time the news is probably all over the neighborhood. Should n't wonder if we are thought to have made away with him. It will be more of a sensation than any thing I ever heard of before in this community. I look as if I 'd been in a fight," he wound up grimly, as he eyed himself in the mirror. Then turning to Robin he said : "Well, my child, take care of yourself ; keep quiet and don't fret over Jared's disappearance, he 's not worth it. Some of us will be over at Airlie to-night to see how you are." And with affectionate good-byes Harmony and her father started off for home.

In a short time the brougham was at the door. Robin was carefully placed in it, Deborah protesting with every breath, but to no purpose. Dick stepped in and took his place at her side, and with instructions to the coachman to drive carefully they set out for Airlie.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.

THE first part of the drive from Ivanwold was silent.

Robin leaned back in the corner of the carriage, pale and languid. She was still going wearily over the events of the night before, from the time of her talk in the tower window to the time of the overthrow. Dick gazed out of the window with a grave expression on his face. He too was thinking of the night before and of the disappearance of Jared Comly. He was wondering if he could have made a mistake, if it were possible his cousin cared for Comly after all, or was her concern only because she fancied herself to blame for the reckless driving and subsequent disaster? He bit the end of his moustache abstractedly, until Robin felt that she could bear the silence no longer. She was about to rouse herself and speak, when Dick turned towards her and said:

"I heard you say last night that Comly has been in the habit of giving way to moods and tempers and staying away when he is in one of them?"

"Yes, it is true, Dick," she said reluctantly; then after a moment's silence she asked:

"What does thee think of his disappearance?"

"Well, cousin," he said, turning sideways to look more fully at her, "I think he was in a reckless, desperate mood, and when he finally overturned us he slunk away."

"Does thee mean thee thinks he deliberately overturned us?" she asked in a low tone.

"Well," he said sternly, "it looks like it, for it was after Captain Esten's and my united remonstrances. If I had seen the danger a moment earlier I should have wrenched the reins out of his hands, but it was too late."

"I am glad thee did not, Dick, for Jared would have struck thee, and there might have been a worse mishap than to be overturned." Dick smiled meaningly and said emphatically :

"He had better not come in my way."

"I do not think he will ever be seen in this neighborhood again," she said pityingly ; and the tears sprang to her eyes as she remembered the hopeless look in Jared's face when he left her in the tower window. Dick saw the tears and the pity in her face. He turned away abruptly and stared out of the window again in silence. In a moment Robin went on :

"In justice to Jared I must say that I do not believe for a moment he had any intention of overturning us. He was, as thee says, reckless. He did not believe there was danger, but afterwards it was much in keeping with what I have known of him for months past to slip away

in the dark in bitter silence, not caring that such an action would be construed as cowardly."

"It was dastardly in him," muttered Dick. Robin continued :

"We have had some very unhappy days over Jared at Airlie in consequence of his moods, but somehow he has always been unhappy and unfortunate. He never had a home, and mother and I have borne with him out of pity. I only say this to thee, Dick, that thee may understand why I view his strange behavior more leniently than thee does. I would never speak of his shortcomings to any one else." She said this frankly not guessing what relief her words were to her companion.

"I understand your feeling perhaps more fully than you think, Robin, and I do you honor for it," Dick said, bending his eyes upon her.

They were nearly at Airlie and Robin began to dread the effect the whole story would have upon her mother ; she hoped no careless rumor had yet reached her. As they drove up the lane she saw Dorothea sitting placidly on the porch. Dick helped Robin to alight, and the girl in her old-fashioned, flowered gown, with a light shawl of Deborah's thrown over her shoulders and covering her maimed arm, presented a curious spectacle to her mother's eyes. As she came up the steps Dorothea rose tremblingly and said :

"Something has happened, thee is hurt."

Then, in a few halting words, Robin told the story of

the expedition to Fool's Manor, the disaster that had overtaken them, and finally of the disappearance of Jared. Dorothea followed each step of the story with an anxious face, and when the culmination was reached in the disappearance, a distressed and horrified look crept into her eyes. She possessed the strong characteristic of the Friends of repressing emotion and bearing things quietly, so she listened silently without any interruptions. After both Dick and Robin had given briefly the principal points, Dorothea asked :

"What occasioned Jared's reckless mood?" There was silence. Robin seemed suddenly to have come to the end of her strength. She made no reply and leaned exhaustedly back in a chair. Dick quietly interposed :

"Aunt Dorothy, Robin is not equal to any thing more at present ; she ought to go to her room and be put to bed, she is already ill. I sent word to the doctor to come here instead of going to Ivanwold again, and he will be here soon. I shall send the carriage home, for of course I will remain here."

"Oh, Richard, I am so glad ; for with Robin crippled, and Jared gone in this dreadful way we are very helpless."

"Mother, it won't be in the least necessary for Dick to stay ; I shall be about to-morrow as usual."

"My cousin," said Dick, "I am not going to presume to interfere or to dictate in any way, but I am going to remain here for the present,"

There was a cool tone of decision in his voice which brooked no dissent. Robin could not enter upon any further remonstrance, and in a few moments, with her mother and Joppa, she had gone slowly to her room, to submit to their ministrations. Dick wrote a line to Deborah, asking her to make his excuses to Standish, saying he should not return to Ivanwold that night, and bidding her send up a man with his things ; then suggesting as an after-thought that Standish should ride up to Airlie the following day. This despatched, Dick turned towards the stables. He had a fancy for seeing what horses were there, for he had a conviction that Comly's would not be among them. At the stable-door he encountered Kane, who looked worried and miserable. As soon as he saw Dick he lowered his voice mysteriously and said :

"'Deed, Mr. Dick, somethin' moughty quare 's happen'. I done lock the stable las' night, an' this mornin' it was wide open an' Mr. Jared's horse gone."

"Did you hear any noise in the night, Kane?"

"No, sir."

Dick considered for a moment. He knew that Jared's disappearance was now settled beyond all doubt, that it would be known through the whole neighborhood before night, and that he might as well give Kane a few facts in the case. He said simply :

"Mr. Jared came and got his horse himself ; he has gone away for a time. And, by the way, Kane, we had

an accident last night ; we drove off the pike in the dark and had a bad spill. Miss Robin had her arm broken ; I have just brought her home." Kane looked at Dick in open-mouthed astonishment for a moment, then there crept over his face a queer, puzzled look as if he were trying to trace a connection between the words and the disappearance of the horse. Dick continued : " I'm going to stop a day or two at Airlie, until Miss Robin feels better ; so if there is any thing to be seen to or to be done, come to me, Kane, with it."

" That I will, Mr. Dick, I's right glad to have some one b'longin' to us come here an' stay ; 'deed Miss Rob's been nigh worried sick o' late."

" How so, Kane ? "

" Well, I's goin' to speak out plain, Mr. Dick. You see, Mr. Jared 's been kin' o' sour an' rough-like for one thing, an' I can see Miss Rob's had a time to hol' in her feelin's 'bout it. Then, you see, we's deep in debt, an' 't ain' right for Miss Rob to kill herself workin' an' worryin'. I ain' been much good sence the oxen pa'lysed me, an' Mr. Gilbert lef' things pretty bad, an' there wa'n' no one but Miss Rob to do nothin' ; an', Mr. Dick, after Mr. Gilbert's death you jes' ough' to seen her eyes shine when I ask' her who 's to give us han's they orders, an' she said she was goin' to work 'long side o' Bill, Saunders, an' me, an' I tell you she's done it. But, Mr. Dick, I can' bear to see her troublin' her min' an' workin' so hard" ; and Kane with difficulty kept the tears out of his eyes.

Dick grasped his hand and shook it warmly, saying :

"Cheer up, Kane, you and I will stand by Miss Robin and the old farm ; every thing will come right some day."

In the afternoon the doctor came. He had missed Dick's message, and gone to Ivanwold, and, finding his patient flown, had followed her, intending to administer a sharp rebuke to her for having taken matters into her own hands. But he found her so restless and feverish that he withheld the rebuke, and ordered her to bed, telling her that if she disobeyed he would not be answerable for the consequences. In truth, Robin was glad enough to be shut in her room away from sight and sound. It was the first time since her father's death that she felt she could take time to be indisposed or idle, for Dick was down-stairs filling her place. He would do every thing necessary ; he would answer all questions and inquiries about Jared ; he would assume the entire responsibility ; and what a relief it was to her to lie there upon her bed in quiet, and to know that every thing was in his hands. Then she thought of the fall work coming on, and all peace fled from her mind. She thought fretfully that, with her broken arm, she should not be able to do a stroke of work on the farm in six weeks or two months, and Jared was gone ; for even should his disappearance be for only a short time, she could never take him back at Airlie, even though he might wish to come, which would be unlikely. How would they get through the autumn ? She would have

to engage some one temporarily to help with the work. How glad she was, for her mother's sake, that Cousin Dick was not in Germany. She knew how unselfishly he would help them through. She would have a long talk with him in the morning, tell him just how the work was planned, and ask him to see to finding some one in Jared's place. But the next morning Robin was ill, too ill to raise her head, too ill to care about the work or the farm, and her talk with her cousin was not held.

Meantime the news of Jared's disappearance swept through the neighborhood like a whirlwind. Nothing like it had ever occurred before ; the consternation was great and profound. Second to it in interest and gravity was the illness of Robin Elgar. The details of the expedition to Fool's Manor became public property, and considerable was the satisfaction felt by many that the old superstition had been verified, that misfortune always overtook those who were rash enough to set foot within the deserted old manor-house. Airlie was besieged with visitors, anxious to inquire for the young farmer, and also to glean some particulars concerning the missing man. Dick took it upon himself to interview the visitors. He met each questioner who came to the farm with a brief but light account of the overturn. He carefully kept Jared's name as free from blame as was possible. Many of the visitors went away convinced that it had been a very reckless, merry party that had gone to

Fool's Manor, and that they had fallen off the pike through sheer heedless jollity, but the mystery of Jared's disappearance remained unsolved. There were not a few in the neighborhood who said that some of the party who went to Fool's Manor knew more than they chose to tell of the night's occurrence and of Jared's whereabouts, but when it was known that his horse had disappeared from Airlie in the dead of night, it became accepted that he had stolen back silently, taken his horse, and gone, whither no one knew. There was some talk of organizing a search party, but it dwindled down to a few, who half-heartedly set about it. All during the autumn it was popular among the young people of the neighborhood to drive or ride to the scene of the accident, but no one had any desire to explore Fool's Manor, and its reputation became even more unsavory than before.

A few days after Dick had installed himself at Airlie, Standish announced his departure. Dick tried to persuade him to stay at Ivanwold, but his friend said that he must be looking after his own affairs, and must return to town. The two men had a long confidential talk. When they parted, Dick grasped Standish's hand, and said warmly :

"I congratulate you heartily, old man ; you deserve it."

"Thanks, but confess that you thought in Germany and on the steamer coming home that I was in love with your cousin, Miss Elgar," Standish said, looking amused.

"To tell the truth, Standish, I did think so," admitted Dick.

They parted with many good wishes, and intentions of meeting at Christmas. In a day or two Standish's engagement to Harmony was announced, and for a brief time Jared's disappearance and Robin's illness ceased to be of the first importance in the neighborhood. Then came a few days and nights when the doctor stayed close at the bedside of his patient at Airlie; when Deborah came up from Ivanwold, and went about the house on tip-toe; when Dorothea sat in the shaded room, with an expression of death on her quiet face; when Dick paced the garden paths, during the long hours of suspense, with anguish in his heart. Then the burden was lifted. Dick, in the happy reaction, threw himself heart and soul into the task of pushing the autumn work. He felt that now was his time, while his cousin was laid by, to get in some of the things he had longed to do for her. For the next few weeks money was lavishly spent in repairing and putting to rights many things which he knew his cousin wanted to have done, but which had been impossible in the state of her finances. He engaged a couple of men to help with the farm-work. The ploughing for wheat and the sowing were accomplished, but Dick confessed to himself many a time that he was no farmer, his taste did not lie in the tillage of the soil, and he wondered more and more at the ease with which his cousin seemed to accomplish the

things which came so hard to him. Wherever he went upon the farm he saw her care and zeal, though the marks could plainly be seen of the long years of Gilbert's neglect ; but over and above it were evidences of a struggle to overcome that neglect. In every nook and corner he saw his cousin's face : at the dairy, in the workshop, in the fields, and in every hour of the day he felt her influence and presence.

He turned over her books in the sitting-room. It was with growing surprise that he saw what a mixture of the best she had fed upon. He came upon a pile of pamphlets and newspapers the margins of which were closely written upon in his cousin's handwriting. All bore upon prominent questions of the day. There were pamphlets upon the tariff ; there were writings of Henry George, and a long article on taxation heavily pencilled with marginal notes ; there were Mill's "Subjection of Women" and "Representative Government." There was besides a motley collection of clippings which all bore more or less upon the different phases of woman's work and woman's progress. They were not the old familiar hammer-and-tongs argument that harked back continually to one demand, but they were the newer, more thoughtful, more logical dealing with the old question. The old argument was there under it all, strong and bright, but approached through other doors. Dick turned over the papers ; they were a revelation to him. He felt that he held the clue to his cousin's strong, suc-

cessful effort to do the work which lay before her when her father had left them the burdened farm as a legacy. He realized that it had been no girlish whim that had made her rebel at her father's words years ago, when he had complained that she would grow up to a useless womanhood. There had been a definite purpose sustaining her ; she had believed that she had a son's duty to perform ; she had taken up her duty, doing it as she believed a young woman of health and mind should, and she had kept abreast with the questions of vital importance of the day, especially those which concerned the women of her country.

Dick turned to the pencillings on the margins of some of the articles. Particularly was he struck with his cousin's notes upon the taxation of women property-holders, and for the first time in his life he realized what the position meant to a broad-minded, well-educated woman. The question was brought home to him practically. Here was he, a taxpayer, caring little for the property he was taxed for, valuing little the vote which controlled that property, and quite indifferent to the uses to which the taxes were applied. Here was his cousin, owning property which she toiled day and night to hold together ; she loved the ground for which she paid so dearly, she knew how to value it, how to take care of it ; she took a vital interest in the disposition of her taxes ; the tax-collector gathered from her as well as from himself ; and yet the only protest that she could

raise in defence of her property was scribbled on the margin of a newspaper article.

A flush of genuine feeling swept over Dick's face as the question appealed to him for the first time in his life. He sat for a long time with the papers and pamphlets in his hands, in deep thought. He had never felt before that these questions were of any importance where women were concerned. He had always complacently fancied that the restless movement among them was confined to a few hard-featured, masculine agitators, but here, in the stillness of the old house, he was confronted by strong and silent arguments which took hold of him with a force that made him determine to learn his cousin's views from her own lips. She had neither clamored nor demanded any thing. She had quietly taken up the labor which her father had laid down, and through that hard labor and still harder experience she had arrived at the opinions which he had found written upon the margins of the old newspapers.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE POINT OF VIEW.

THREE weeks from the day of the expedition to Fool's Manor Robin was sitting up and even moving about her room. She was very impatient to go downstairs and take up the burden of her duties. She knew, of course, that there was some one filling her place and taking all responsibility, but she could not submit easily to the long enforced quiet. Dick was of course still at Airlie. He made almost daily visits to Ivanwold, and it was to go and come each time with growing dissatisfaction in his heart—dissatisfaction at the position he occupied towards his cousin. He smiled grimly as he thought of it—he, of all men, who had never given thought or play to the sentiments of life, to be entangled in such an uncertain web as his love for his cousin was proving. He longed to go to her and plead his cause boldly, but he knew he must wait. The only relief he found in the situation was in hard work. He brought out Gilbert's desk, which had stood so long in a dark corner of the sitting-room, and began outlining a series of papers he

had been asked to read before a Boston Society of Natural History ; and as he had been allowed to suit himself as to dates, he had fixed upon a time late in the approaching winter, knowing that by that time his cousin's health would be fully re-established.

It was perhaps rather exceptional that a man only a little over thirty years of age should have attained any prominence in science, a prominence not often attained till middle life and oftener not attained at all ; but from the time that Dick had studied with Rosenbusch he had shown an ability and acuteness quite phenomenal. As he grew older and gained experience in the field, he prepared and read a series of papers before one of the scientific societies of the University, which afterwards had been published. These papers had shown remarkable quickness in detecting the real significance of scientific data, and they had attracted considerable attention. They were followed by a series of papers still more able, and from that time, young though he was, he had been recognized as a man of ability, as one of the probable coming scientific lights. His career was even compared to that of Lyell, who had become famous before he was thirty. When Dick returned to his own country he had received many flattering letters from prominent men of science, and it was his wish to come in contact with them, and to plunge as soon as possible into the work of research which the vast area of his own country offered.

Hand in hand with his work was the dream of his cousin. He always seemed to see himself setting out with some survey-party or going off on some lecturing tour, perhaps alone, perhaps accompanied, but always returning to her, and, strangely enough, always returning to Airlie. Not Airlie as it was to-day, but Airlie as it might be, a model estate, brought to the highest perfection by a woman's brains through the medium of his wealth. Then he thought of the other side of the picture : of Airlie as perhaps it would be, with two lonely women, one going to her grave weary and spent, the other with all youth crushed out under a load of debt and drudgery ; and himself poking around among dusty rocks, or grubbing short-sightedly for some scientific wonder in the side of a sandbank, crabbed, old and alone, with Ivanwold shut up or rented.

At this point in his reflections he would shake himself up and mutter : " A cheerful picture, by Jove ! "

Meanwhile, he told his aunt that he must see his cousin. Dorothea demurred and put him off for a day or two. Finally he told her that the price of wheat had gone up, and he thought it a good time to sell, but he could not do so, of course, without talking it over with his cousin and knowing her wishes in the matter. One day at the very end of October he stood upon the threshold of her room. He was to see her at last. A bright fire was burning upon the hearth ; the ruddy glow lighted only a part of the room. To one side of the fire-place, almost

in shadow, Robin was sitting on the old lounge. Dorothea's form could just be traced dimly against the window. Dick stood in the doorway. He completely filled it, and would have to bend his head to enter. He lingered, almost fearing to move, the room was so still. At last Robin said brightly :

"Is it thee, Dick?"

He entered instantly and crossed the room to her side. As the light from the fire fell upon him for an instant, it seemed to Robin that the first touch of energy and life since the day of their fateful drive to Fool's Manor entered and took possession of her. She rose to her feet and put out her hand. Dick kissed it tenderly, then once again more impetuously, and held it fast, while he drew up a low chair that was within reach and seated himself close to the lounge. But, strangely enough, he had nothing to say. He could only try to trace her features in the dim, flickering light, and clasp more closely the hand which he did not release. Robin seemed content that her hand should remain in her cousin's. She felt very much as she used to when she was a child and slipped her hand into Dick's. There stole over her a strange pleasure in the fact of mere existence, which she did not try to analyze. She said finally :

"It seems actually blissful, Dick, to come back to life again."

Dick did not reply. He had never felt such difficulties with speech before. The things that were hovering

on his lips it would not do to utter ; the words he ought to say, which meant nothing, would not come at his bidding. Dorothea turned from the window and looked at the silent pair. There rose up in her heart a wish which was almost a prayer, that in her child's life there was dawning the one thing which in her opinion made a woman's life and happiness complete. She came forward with her groping, hesitating step. Dick sprang up to wheel a chair in front of the fire for her, and the feeling of strange emotion which had seemed to hold him silent for so long a time was broken. Robin's fast-returning health was talked of for a time, then the state of the work on the farm was entered into, and finally Dick boldly laid before his cousin the repairs he had taken upon himself to make while she was ill. She had placed him on the cousinly footing, almost, indeed, upon a brotherly footing ; surely she ought to accept it frankly in that spirit. She listened quietly while he went into the details of what he had done ; then she turned to him and said falteringly :

"Both mother and I are grateful, Dick, for all thee has done ; indeed I have no way of expressing how I feel about it."

Dick would have seen tears in her eyes if the room had not been so dark. As it was, he felt the emotion in her voice. He replied, lightly and gayly :

"You may not feel so grateful when you see a mansard roof on the ice-house and the color of the paint on

the barn ; there is no knowing where I would have stopped if I had not heard you were coming down-stairs."

There was a pause ; then Robin asked, gravely :

"Has there been no news of Jared Comly?"

"None," replied Dick ; then he went on to say that Jared's relatives had come one day to Airlie. They, with his aunt and himself, had talked the strange affair all over. His brother said that Jared had always been a rolling-stone, restless and unsettled ; that he was his own worst enemy ; it might be years before they would hear of him again. They had afterwards removed to their home Jared's belongings, but strange to say only about one half of his things could be found, which convinced them that he had for some time contemplated leaving Airlie, and had taken his things away quietly preparatory to going suddenly himself. After this there was a long silence, then the conversation drifted to Dick's own movements. He spoke of his work and of the time when he should go off to read his papers, which would be in February or March. Then it came time for him to take his leave.

For the few days following he presented himself with unfailing regularity at the twilight hour with a report of the day's doings, and it became the one hour to him out of the whole twenty-four. The first week of November was drawing to a close when Robin went down-stairs for the first time. Soon she drove out with her mother in

Dick's snug carriage, and she began to think that it was selfish of them to allow Dick to stay away any longer from Ivanwold. She told him as much, but he replied that he intended to stay at Airlie, unless forbidden, until he should leave the neighborhood to keep his engagements ; by that time all work on the farm would practically have ceased, and she would be as strong as ever, her arm being already nearly as sound as the other.

Robin, having assured herself that nothing had been lost by her illness, began to enjoy the absolute freedom from care, and the presence of her cousin in the house was most delightful. Dorothea even begrudged the time Dick took to visit his own home, and both mother and daughter dreaded to think of the time when he would leave them. Dorothea openly said so one day, and Dick caught a sudden answering flash from his cousin's eyes which made him look questioningly into her face, but the look was gone. He turned away, but he knew he had seen it, if only for an instant.

The time flew by and was spent by the cousins in delightful reading and still more delightful discussions. Dick had not forgotten the pamphlets and papers which he had found during his cousin's illness. He wanted to draw her out upon the questions which he knew lay so near her heart. He led up to them many a time, always to be put off by her. She seemed reluctant to lay them bare. Robin had never talked really with any one upon

the question of "Equal Rights," but she realized that Dick had brought up the question many times, that sooner or later she should have to state her side of the argument. She knew that he was by no means illiberal, but he was a man and bound to see the question from the standpoint of his sex, and from the standpoint of iron-bound custom. One December afternoon, when she and Dick had come from the dairy and had just entered the sitting-room, Dick suddenly brought up the subject. He mentioned the great council of women which had been held in town the year before, the fame of which had reached him even in Germany. Robin stated quickly that she had attended the council, she had ridden twice to town and back on horseback during its session. Dick said immediately :

"How does it happen, cousin, that you, a Quaker, are so interested in this question, and hold such advanced ideas?"

"How does thee know I have advanced ideas?" she asked.

"By those papers and pamphlets and by your own handwriting endorsing them," he said, pointing to the pile which lay in a paper-rack.

Robin smiled and said : "I am convicted, I see ; but thee forgets, Dick, I am by no means the first Friend who has held advanced ideas ; thee forgets the Grimke sisters and Lucretia Mott. Besides, half the men and women among the Friends in this very neighborhood

to-day feel and think as I do, though I never have talked upon the subject with any one. But I am quite willing to do so now and take my stand."

A flash sprang to her eyes as she felt that she was to stand forth for the first time in her life an avowed champion for the cause of woman. Dick looked at her gravely. He thought of her splendid education, of her clear, sound mind, and of all she had accomplished and would still accomplish in the domain of a man. He said to himself: "There must be something in the question, or such a woman, the equal of any man living, would not take up the cause." There was silence for a time. Robin was in profound thought; she was revolving how to begin the subject, how best to put the case. Thoughts came rushing into her mind in distinct shape. With brightened eyes she broke out abruptly, in a cool, quiet, reflective way:

"See here, Dick, this is the way it presents itself to me. Clearly every human being is born to as many and the same rights that every other human being is. Each has the same right to acquire and hold or to sell property, and of course must have the right to use all the known means of protection and preservation that all or any others have. To my mind these are self-evident propositions." She glanced at him inquiringly. He nodded his head in token of assent. She then went on, rapidly and forcibly: "Now, in that supposed state of nature, each and all were born equals. The mother cared for

her offspring till each wandered off, grew, and cared for itself, boys and girls alike. What one might do, the other did also, so far as strength was concerned. Each cared for itself, each was born with a right to that. But upon the formation of social life, the imaginary social compact, each relinquished the right and power of individual government for the right of being governed and protected by the society; and in this relinquishment, each gave up the same exactly, man and woman, and each should in return have received the same, man and woman alike. If this new creation, society, has provided any means with which its constituent members could protect themselves in the new social relation, these members on reaching the prescribed age of full citizenship should each and all be armed with the same weapons, woman as well as man. The right to this is surely a natural right. The right of self-government is surely a natural right."

A sudden movement on Dick's part arrested Robin. Before she could resume he broke in :

"Then, cousin, you would push your argument to the well-known extreme : You would claim the ballot?" he asked interestedly.

Robin meditated a moment. The question had never been directly asked of her before. The drag of her mother's old-time notions had always hitherto held her from expressing her views openly, but now she replied quickly :

"Why not, Dick? If the ballot is one of the means of self-government, is not the right to vote a natural right as much and in the same sense as the right to food, clothes, shelter? for all these depend upon the power to govern, protect, and care for one's self. And what other really effective means to government is there but the ballot? In our social system one cannot govern one's self directly; that must be done by means of the familiar social instrumentalities. Now, as these instrumentalities are the agencies of the individuals making up society, why should not every one concerned have part in their selection? Indeed, the so-called social compact by its terms seems to me to imply this. Woman has always been denied this right of self-government, although in the state of nature she had it, and gave it up. On the formation of the social compact, in the new organization she received nothing. The man received his own dues and hers also, and when pressed he says he represents her, he is her agent, her guardian, her protector, her head and brain-master. How and when came he by this power and right to represent? Now, one can in no sense represent another without that other's free, untrammelled choice. It is an atrocious usurpation for one by mere strength to assume thus to represent, and then to legalize the usurpation by the iron chains of law; by habit, custom and education, more iniquitous than law. Yet these are the sole sources of man's dominion over woman. Take an illustration. Our government, resting on the consent of the governed,

needs revenues, contributions from the subjects, the citizens, to carry it on. The only equitable, just ground for this revenue is a grant or concession of the subjects, the citizens. This principle, so natural, just and equitable in itself, and so practicable when government rests on suffrage, is the foundation, the sole source, of revenue both in this country and in Great Britain. It would be the true source if all citizens possessed the suffrage. The people, by their representatives freely chosen, vote the amount of revenue, so much by direct taxation, so much by indirect imposts and stamps. Now, in the choice of these representatives the woman is represented by man, by her husband, father, son, or brother ; that is the claim. But take the case of the woman without father, husband, son, or brother : who represents her ? Every such woman either owns property to be taxed directly, or consumes food and fabrics taxed indirectly. Does not this test the whole matter and show the utter fallacy of existing views as embodied in the law ? ”

Robin was hardly less surprised than Dick at her unprecedentedly long and vigorous speech. It was clear that she was fully roused, and that she had a listener worthy of her. For a short space of time both were silent, then Dick said :

“ You know, cousin, that my life and training have rather led me away from questions of this sort, so you will find me scarcely fit to talk with you on the subject ; but I recall enough from my reading to suggest, that

in the light of history the so-called social compact, with its imaginary state of nature, never better than a hypothesis, has been discredited and finally cast aside."

"True," replied Robin, "I should have qualified my use of the term. As an expression purporting to define an actual historical occurrence it must undoubtedly be discarded, but, as has been said, it may yet well be 'a convenient form for the expression of moral truths.' I do not mean more than this in using the phrase. But put even the phrase aside, how is the argument affected? The mere fact that history shows a given condition to have existed, even from time immemorial, is no moral justification of that condition. Was slavery right because of its long life unquestioned?"

"I would not say that," said Dick, "but much is to be said in favor of a condition which has always had its support in the institutions of marriage and the family and what those institutions involve. There is, and has always been, a head as between man and wife, a head of a family, and the head has in each case been rightly or wrongly the man. The process by which man as distinguished from woman became the political unit seems to me most natural, and I do not see how the result of that process can well be changed. You would not have two heads, would you?"

Robin smiled. "That is the old familiar argument that is always brought forth, but is that really the question? Is not the question rather this: should woman,

who is equally bound by the laws, be disqualified solely by her sex to participate in the making of those laws? for we agree, I assume, that all laws should be of the making of the governed?"

"If you put it that way," answered Dick, "I think that sex should to no extent be the test of participation in political rights. The ballot is now in the hands of thousands to whom it never should have been given; from whom, indeed, I, for one, insist it should be taken away. Surely it cannot be claimed that the situation is to be improved by conferring upon all women what the best judges agree should not belong to all men?"

"Thee means, I suppose," queried Robin, "that as there are many men unfit to have the ballot, as many women in proportion are in the same predicament?"

"Yes," answered Dick.

"That is probable," she replied, "but again I do not see that that affects the argument. Thy position is that, because some women should not have the ballot, all must not have it. Is that fair? Take the case I have already mentioned, of the woman without father, husband, son, or brother; be she never so qualified, she is yet denied all right to a voice in her own government, simply because she is a woman. Does thee think it a fair reason for such a state of things to say that some other woman is unfit to enjoy such a right?"

"Ah!" cried Dick, "you are moving to new ground; you are narrowing your claim to the case of a woman

peculiarly placed and undoubtedly qualified. I agree that much is to be said in favor of such a claim."

"No, I am not moving to new ground," persisted Robin, echoing Dick's words, "I am only using an illustration. Take another : take the case of a woman owning property and paying taxes ; should not she have a word to say as to the laws governing that property or disposing of those taxes, whether or not she has the supposed male representative assumed ?"

"Again, dear cousin," interposed Dick, "you take a special case. And as for the idea of a male representative, I make very little of that. You know that no government is really based on the idea of an individual representative for each or any given member of society. In most if not all governments large minorities are at times totally unrepresented. I know your answer," he added quickly, for Robin was about to speak, "you would say that those minorities have the right to vote, and that the exercise of that right is in itself participation in government. In a false sense, yes, but in reality it is only a futile attempt at such participation. Of what practical avail is such a right ? The man in the minority cannot be said to be governed by his consent."

"Not literally," answered Robin, "but the point is that he has place in a system which has his consent, and so in effect he does consent, although, for the time being, his immediate wishes are not realized in the government. The avail of even a futile vote is just this ; it enables

the minority to give expression to its wish, and if enough be added to that minority it becomes itself the governing majority, and so has its wish. But really, Dick, thee seems to me always to get away from the question," added Robin, gravely.

"Well," he said, smiling, "let us come back to it. I was objecting that you rest your argument on special cases."

"I thought that I had answered that," said she. "Because some women ought not, as thee thinks, to have the ballot, thee would deny it to all. And yet all men have it, although, as thee admits, many should not."

"Well, cousin," said Dick, who was beginning to feel that he was not a very successful disputant on the theme, "I see that we look at the question from wholly different sides."

"Exactly," interrupted Robin with an air of satisfaction, "when thee says that thee yields every thing : it is just because thee cannot look at the question from my side, that thee thinks as thee does."

Dick smiled. "Does n't that cut both ways?" he asked quizzically, and without waiting for a reply, he added : "I was saying that we look at the question from different sides, and so, I fear, we shall never be at one. Why not compromise? Why not accept my admission that many men now unjustifiably have what you want, and that some women, equally unjustifiably if you please, do not have it. Then, on your side, why not admit that

many women ought not to have it any more than the undeserving men? Then we should agree that the right to the ballot should be determined by a higher test than sex, and so we should stand on principle."

"Utopian," said Robin smiling and with a shake of the head: "Thee cannot get the ballot away from the undeserving man, and woman will not be content to be put on a narrower footing than her brethren. She feels, with Mill, that 'there ought to be no pariahs in a full-grown and civilized nation,' and she believes that in the end universal suffrage will be 'justified of her children,' though, to quote Mill again, 'that education of the intelligence and of the sentiments which is carried down to the very lowest ranks of the people when they are called to take a part in acts which directly affect the great interests of their country——' "

"Ah, yes, cousin," interrupted Dick: "I know that old tune, 'the ballot as an educator,' but——"

"Never mind the 'but,' " she broke in, "I know what thee would say: that ignorance and bribery and all that are rampant among the voting classes, even after years of the privilege; but, pray, is that the question? Does thee really think that without the ballot ignorance and wrongdoing among the present voters would be less? No, Dick, what thee says reminds me of the fallen saints we see about us; it is because they are saints that we make so much of their fall; if they were not saints they would still be as bad or worse."

Silence fell between them after these last remarks, and before the topic could be resumed Dorothea came into the room with the announcement that Harmony Esten had just driven over from The Hatch with Henry Standish, who had come from town to spend the Christmas holidays. The two young people rose reluctantly to follow Dorothea. At the door Dick detained Robin a moment to say :

"Cousin, you have put your case ably, and I am not satisfied with my own showing on the question. We will return to it again ; perhaps we may meet on more nearly common ground next time."

"Then thee will need to change thy position," she said.

"Perhaps," he replied significantly, as he held the door open for her ; and they went out to greet the newcomers.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"HAWKINS IS CALLIN'."

OF course it was not possible for Dick to remain so long at Airlie without giving rise to much talk and gossip in the neighborhood. It was considered natural enough for him to stay on the farm during Robin's illness, but when she was able to be about again, nay, even riding out in his carriage, and when two farm hands had been hired to do Jared's work and her own too, then people nodded their heads and wondered why he lingered. The interest of every one in Fenny Drayton was centred in the movements at Airlie. If Dick was met on the turnpike going in any direction away from Airlie, it was to be greeted with, "Taking a holiday, Elgar?" or "Thee 's going in the wrong direction, eh, Dick?" Then there would be an accompanying smile or a knowing look, till Dick heartily wished the whole neighborhood would fix its attention in some other quarter. He hoped that none of the idle talk would reach his cousin's ears, and he began to think that he had better hurry his departure from Airlie. He

knew that if he were ever to win Robin, it would not be by staying at her side continually. He felt that his chances were, perhaps, very small of ever winning her at all. He had had a half-fancy that during her illness and convalescence he had made himself so indispensable to her that she could not do without him, and he smiled half bitterly to himself when he thought how utterly dispelled that idea had been, and how independent of him she was. Since his first talk with her upon the question of woman, they had several times gone back to the topic, taking it up in all its phases and bearings. The logical and direct way in which she had put her arguments, if not convincing, was at least forcible and not to be ignored. He realized that she was not a woman ever to marry because she should need protection or help on the farm; if she ever married, it would be solely for love; and Dick thrilled as he thought what the love of such a woman would be. Would it ever be his? he wondered. Then he suddenly asked himself if he could ever expect her to give up her home, her work, and follow him? Could he expect her to sacrifice all she had undertaken on the farm? The work she had elected to do in life could not be carried on anywhere else. Her mother was too old and frail to be transplanted to a new home, and to ask a daughter to leave her was out of the question. Why should she be called upon to make any sacrifice? Why should not the sacrifice be his rather than hers, if there must be any at all? His work could be as

well accomplished in one place as another. He had much less at stake than she. He had been a wanderer for so many years he could live anywhere ; he had no ties, he had no affection for his own home ; why should not he go to Airlie and pitch his tent, instead of breaking up their home and transplanting them all to Ivanwold, dreary, unhome-like Ivanwold ? No, he said to himself, reflectively, whatever changes of living had to be made should be made by him ; they would mean less to him. She should continue her work in her own way ; she should have his aid whenever she wanted it. He would have his work ; but what would he do with Ivanwold ?

Dick smiled to think how his thoughts had run riot. The picture he had drawn was certainly rather an ideal one, perhaps Utopian. He knew that if ever such an arrangement should come about, it would be regarded as one of the wonders of the world. He would doubtless be accused of having fallen under the sway of a strong-minded woman, but he smiled to think how little he should care for the opinion of this little particular corner of Maryland ; his back was broad, he could bear it, provided he had his cousin's love. He made up his mind that as soon as the Christmas holidays were over, he would take himself off for several months. He would seek out some of his mother's relatives, and after a taste of their social life would keep his literary engagements ; then perhaps in the spring he would join some expedi-

tion going into the field, and in the summer return to the country ; to what ?

Meantime, the cousins, together with Harmony Esten and Henry Standish, had gathered Christmas greens. The Club had been held at The Hatch as usual, and had brought in its train to the two women at Airlie the many sad memories which always clustered about Christmas-tide. The holidays were at last over. Harmony's marriage was fixed upon for the early summer, occasioning thereby much bitterness of spirit to Thaddy Watkins, who looked black and sulky whenever any chance meeting brought him in contact with the young people. The neighborhood finally settled down to the leisure and quiet of the winter.

As soon as January was fairly ushered in Dick made his preparations to go East. He dreaded to turn his back upon Airlie and all that it held for him, but he realized that his own work in life must claim his attention. He did not announce his intended departure until the last moment. One day he said to Dorothea, who was sitting before the sitting-room fire alone :

" Aunt Dorothy, I am going East in a couple of days."

Dorothea looked amazed. She had fancied that he would not leave them until late in the winter, by which time she fondly hoped that her daughter would realize all that Dick was to them, and would be won by his manliness to accepting him.

" Going, Richard ? " was all she could say.

“Yes, dear aunt, I think the sooner I go the better.”

“Thee has given up then, entirely, Richard?” she asked sorrowfully.

“No, aunt, I am going because I have not given up.” There was a pause, then he went on: “However much I may dread to leave you and Robin during the lonely winter months, I must no longer abandon my work. I have been in America six months, and I have done nothing. I begin to be restless at this unusual idleness, and I think, as I said before, the sooner I am away the better.”

“How long will thee stay away, Richard?”

“Six months, probably.”

“Six months!” she echoed drearily; then she added: “What will we do without thee, Richard, all during the dreary winter months? We shall miss thee terribly, and I am sure Robin is beginning to depend upon thee. She needs thee more than she is aware of.”

“She may miss me, perhaps, but need me—never!”

Dick spoke with energy, and with just a tinge of bitterness in his voice. Dorothea felt certain from his tone that her daughter had been giving utterance to some of her queer notions. She remembered the time when she had told her that she did not “need a man to take care of her, she could do that for herself”; and Dorothea felt sure that Dick had probably heard the same thing. She hastily said:

“I hope Robin has not been telling thee of her

independent notions of not needing a man to take care of her, and of her dreadful ideas about equal rights?"

Dick smiled at the unusual energy and feeling in his aunt's tone. "Well, aunt, she has given me her views on the subject, and while they certainly are advanced, they are not dreadful. I am not at all prepared to follow her to the extreme she goes; still, there is something in the argument, and I think we must agree that she has earned a right to think as she does, as every other woman has, who proves, as she has done, that she can stand side by side with men intellectually and physically."

"Oh, Richard! Richard! thee too believes in this wretched movement, which will make the women of our country eschew marriage and the home life?"

"Oh! come, now, Aunt Dorothy, you go too far the other way. I am sure that you confound, as so many do, the two things. I am certain that Robin, who has argued the question from many sides during the last few days, does not disbelieve in nor decry marriage, nor see any reason why the two may not go hand-in-hand. I confess I have been staggered by the whole question, as she presents it. I am not able to see my way clearly, but I do not mean to close my ears and eyes to it, simply because I am a man, and cannot see it from her standpoint. To do so would be to set myself down as narrow-minded and ungenerous." Dick did not pause to

think that his words reflected upon his aunt's attitude on the question. She sighed and said wearily :

"Well, Richard, I am old-fashioned and conservative. Robin has not talked much about these things. Of course I cannot but know her mind upon them. Jared used sometimes to discuss the question, and he always thought with me. He talked as I like to have a man talk, who regards himself as the natural protector and head of the family."

Dick smiled gravely, and said, with an odd tone in his voice : "Yes, I can fancy exactly what Comly would think upon such a question." But he did not mean to enter upon any further discussion, and both became silent. After a little, Dorothea said :

"Richard, suppose in the days to come thy wishes should never be realized, will thee go away from us entirely? Thee knows I am an old woman now, and I cling to the few who are left me."

"No, aunt, I would never permanently leave my kinswomen, but living at Ivanwold would be out of the question. I should probably become something of a wanderer again. But where is Robin? it grows late."

"The men are cutting ice this afternoon, and Robin went out to look after them."

"Why, this is only our first cold snap; why does she not wait for better ice?"

"Ah, Richard, it never does, in our changeable climate, to pass by the first good freeze."

"Robin did not tell me she intended to be out on the farm to-day. I should not have stayed so long at Ivan-wold if I had known it."

He hurried from the room out into the sharp, frosty air. He crossed the side lawn and turned into the narrow back lane at the end of which was the shallow ice-pond. When he came within a certain distance he could plainly hear the sharp sound of the axe, the scraping noise of the ice-hook, and the ringing of the blocks of ice as they were thrown into the cart. He came upon the group and stopped a moment to take in the perfect winter scene. Two of the men were on the ice with axe and ice-hook; two stood upon the edge of the pond, close to which the ox-cart was drawn up. They tossed the chunks one to the other and thence to the cart, while Robin, with Adsum and Kane at her side, stood watching the scene with interest. Overhead was a cold gray sky, and in the distance a background of dense, leafless woods. Dick hurried forward, saying:

"Is it prudent for you to be exposed to this cold, cousin?"

Kane spoke up quickly, before she could reply: "'Deed, Mr. Dick, I's right glad you's come 'long. I's been tellin' Miss Rob it's no use her stayin' in this yere cold. For Hawkins done called sure 'nough this time." Robin smiled and Dick looked puzzled.

"Who is 'Hawkins,' Kane?" Dick asked. Kane looked incredulous that any one should not know who "Hawkins" was. Robin interposed:

"Why, Dick, 'Hawkins' is the north wind, and whenever it grows very bitter in winter, our Maryland negroes say 'Hawkins is round,' and if it blows and blusters they say 'Hawkins is callin,'" she explained.

"Well, then, cousin, to use Kane's parlance 'Hawkins is callin,' too loudly for you to be out here any longer."

"It is not a bit cold, Dick ; I revel in this keen air." She turned a glowing face and sparkling eyes upon him. Dick took in the robust, young figure, the face partly sheltered by a large drooping felt hat, the heavy, close-fitting jacket, the kilted skirt, and thick, stout boots made like a man's. Robin saw his glance sweep over her. She said quickly as if in answer :

"Thee sees I am warmly dressed. Perhaps my garb is not very pretty nor stylish, but, Dick, thee knows I could not get about with drapery or furbelows on my out-of-door farm dress." There was a half-deprecating tone in her voice. Dick said quickly :

"I was thinking, cousin, that I never saw you look so well, or so becomingly dressed ; it is the first time I have seen you in your winter work-a-day garb."

When the cart was finally laden and began to creak over the frozen ground on its way to the ice-house, the two young people followed slowly behind it.

"I believe, Robin, you fairly delight in every variety of farm work."

"Yes, Dick, I can fancy no life so full, so satisfactory as that of a successful farmer, who sees his crops turn out well, whose farm flourishes and improves from year to

year, whose stock is all of the best, purest breeds, whose land is his own, untouched by mortgage or debt."

She sighed as she ended her words. Dick turned and looked into the face, clouded for an instant by the burden which lay so heavily upon her, and he thought what an unattainable woman she was ; perhaps it was going to be entirely out of his power ever to lift the burdens which pressed upon her. He had no clue to the state of her feelings for him, there was no shade in her manner to him by which to determine it. There had been only the flash from her eyes on the memorable day when his aunt had openly expressed her sorrow for the time when his departure from Airlie should take place. He remembered that that same flash from her eyes had brought the first hope to his heart. They had reached the porch. It was almost dusk, and feeling the nearness of his departure he said abruptly :

"I am going to leave Airlie to-morrow, my cousin."

There was silence for a moment, while the wide brim of Robin's hat shielded her face so completely that Dick could get no idea of its expression.

"Well, Dick," she said slowly, "I cannot but think thee is right. We have taken up thy time and monopolized thee unwarrantably. I am now really as well and strong as I ever was. Thee has thy work and thy duties elsewhere. But thee must come up nearly every day and see us? Thee won't mind the bad roads? for we shall be very lonely, mother and I." And she looked up in

his face with the same old frankness that she used to show him as a child.

"But, cousin, day after to-morrow I shall leave Ivan-wold and the neighborhood entirely."

"Entirely?" she echoed in surprise. "Does thee mean forever?" she asked in a quick way.

"No, not forever, only for some months. You see," he said cheerfully and lightly, "I have been idle a long time, and I am quite unused to it. I think it is high time I was picking up the threads and making a place for myself in my native country. What do you think?" He turned towards her, trying to read some expression upon the cheek and lips, the only parts of her face visible beneath the hat.

"You do not answer," he said at last, as she continued silent.

"As I said before, I think thee is quite right," she finally replied in a low tone. Her manner was soft and gentle. She did not look at him. An indefinable something made Dick face her suddenly, compelling her to look up at him. He asked quickly and with a ring in his voice :

"Robin, do you need me ? do you want me to stay ?"

Was he thinking of her debts ? she wondered. She herself had recalled them to him only a few moments before ; was he again going to offer her pecuniary aid ? The slight hesitancy of speech and softness of manner vanished. She looked up gravely and said :

"No, Dick, I do not need thee."

They stood a moment facing each other. Dick wondered what had brought so sudden a change in her manner, which had been so soft and gentle a moment before. She probably had answered thus to show him that she would suffer no avowal from his lips; he must accept it. He did not dream that she was thinking of the old debts and connecting them with his words, construing the latter as a preliminary step towards offering financial help. They stood silent in the gathering dusk of the winter night. The wind whistled round the corner of the porch, and the old locust trees in the west lawn swayed and bent before the fierce blast. Robin slightly shivered. Dick noticed it and said quietly, in his usual voice as if resuming the conversation of a few moments back:

"What a quaint conceit to invest the north wind with such an every-day sort of personality. I shall never hear the wind blow again without thinking of 'Hawkins,' and of the perfect picture your group made at the ice-pond to-day."

Robin made no answer. She felt the change from Dick's previous earnest words to the light tone of his casual remark. She had a sudden conviction that his words had held no suggestion such as she had sensitively fancied; he had had no thought of offering aid, and the real meaning of his words flashed over her so overwhelmingly that she was dumb. She could say nothing; she could not explain that she had misunderstood. He had

been thinking of a need more far-reaching than the need of money when he had asked, "Do you need me ? do you want me to stay ?" His words, though not a direct avowal, seemed plain in the sudden illumination which came to her. She felt that she had rejected him a second time.

CHAPTER XXX.

ROBIN FACES THE TRUTH.

DICK and Robin lingered for a few moments in the keen night air, though neither felt that there was any thing further to say. At last they turned reluctantly and entered the sitting-room, rather subdued. Dick tried to throw off the quiet mood which he felt stealing over him. It was his last night at Airlie and they must not guess what it meant to him. There was nothing to suggest to Dorothea that any words of moment had passed between them ; she could not be certain that Robin even knew of his intended departure. As the evening passed and they talked of various things, she began to be troubled lest her daughter really did not know that Dick was hastening the time of his leaving them. She did not wish Robin to be unduly surprised ; but a chance word soon set her at rest, and before they parted for the night his going was quite fully discussed.

The next day Dick left Airlie. As he was leaving Dorothea begged him to ride up for a final good-bye before he left the neighborhood the following day. But

Dick gayly replied that he did not find parting such "sweet sorrow" as to wish it to be long drawn out. He kissed Dorothea tenderly, but he only took Robin's hands for a moment ; he knew that he had no cousin's kiss to give her. There was nothing by which to tell that the parting was a trial to him ; not an allusion to any time of meeting in the future, not a backward, tender look for the woman who stood on the porch and silently watched him ride away. Dorothea had not gone out to the porch to see him off, for "Hawkins" was whistling keenly in the chimneys and round the corners of the old house, and she could not bear his icy touch. When Robin entered the sitting-room a moment later her mother noted the grave look upon her face and the pre-occupied manner in which she set about some light home tasks. Dorothea meant to be wise ; she would not question her daughter, she would make no remark, she would not repeat what Dick had said the day before about going away because he had not given up. She felt that should Robin arrive at a knowledge of any love for her cousin it must come to her unaided by hint or suggestion from her. She herself must not betray any solicitude in the matter, such as she had felt and injudiciously expressed in Jared's case. Poor, hot-headed, homeless Jared, where was he now ? she wondered. She thought of him sorrowfully, although she did not often speak of him, but as Robin came near her chair on some errand she said suddenly :

"Daughter, where does thee suppose Jared is?"

"Indeed, mother, I do not know," she said sadly. She could scarcely bear to hear him mentioned, for it brought back the dreadful expedition to Fool's Manor, the painful words in the tower window, the disastrous ride home, and her subsequent illness. She had never told her mother of what had passed between them. She dreaded to recall the reckless, hopeless words he had uttered, but to-day, in the hush and winter quiet which surrounded them, she felt like going over the whole event, of unburdening to her mother the whole story of his declaration. She said:

"This is the first time I have felt like going over the events of the night of Jared's disappearance, and I would like to tell thee, mother, what passed between us in the tower window." She laid before her mother the whole scene. Dorothea listened quietly. She wiped away the silent tears as they gathered. When Robin had finished she asked:

"Did any one of the party know what had passed between you, daughter?"

"No, mother, though Cousin Dick guessed something of it."

"Thee feels sure, daughter, that Jared is living—that he did not lay violent hands upon himself?"

"Yes, mother, I am sure of it; I think he has gone out West again. I believe he had been planning to leave us suddenly. He once told me that the West was

no place for a Quaker, but in spite of that there was something in the rough life on a ranch which had a fascination for him, and I believe he has returned to it."

"I sometimes think, daughter, that Jared's recklessness and moods came more from disappointed hopes than from disposition and character."

"No, mother, thee is wrong in thy estimate. He was innately moody, reckless, and at times almost savage. Heaven help him ! poor fellow." They said no more.

The winter closed in stormy and bleak. The roads became almost impassable ; the lane was a sheet of glaring ice. Rain, sleet and hail succeeded each other, with only occasional snow, which did not stay long upon the ground. There was absolutely nothing going on in the neighborhood. The weather made any thing like sociability almost impossible, and the two women scarcely left Airlie for weeks together. Robin dismissed one of the men whom Dick had hired in the autumn ; there was nothing for him to do, and keeping him was an expense she could ill afford. She made her daily rounds of the dairy and stables, no matter what the weather was. After Jared had disappeared in the early autumn and while she was sick, Kane, crippled though he was, had undertaken the weekly trips to town with the market-wagon. As the winter advanced and the weather grew stormier these trips became very rough. Robin thought Kane was not fit to be so exposed. She said as much.

"'Deed, Miss Rob, you 's not to say n'ary word. I 's

crippled, but I 's got more sense than Bill or Saunders or the new man, an' I 's the onliest one can han'le the money decent an' safe. So I 's goin' to town."

However, the girl insisted that he must have some one of the half-grown boys picked up from among the many in the neighborhood to go with him each week ; they would be only too glad of a jaunt to the great town. In spite of this precaution, Robin would watch anxiously for Kane's return on the market-days. She would go to the porch, or half-way down the icy, slippery lane, to listen for the rattle of the wagon. She felt that Kane was very precious to her. He was one of the few links between the old, careless, prosperous days of her father's time and the straightened, troubled days of the present. She could rely upon his discretion and advice almost as surely as upon his faithful service. And when the day should come that he could no longer serve her, he should be cared for and provided for as long as Airlie roof was over their heads. Whenever he came home from town there was always awaiting him a roaring fire in the inner kitchen, a comfortable warm drink, and a steaming hot supper, and, better than all, a sweet word from " Miss Rob."

The days slipped by, but they were lonely days for the two women. They did not tell each other so, nor did they make any complaint. Robin felt it less than her mother ; she had her daily tasks, her books, and her own thoughts, which seemed at times to be absorbing. But

Dorothea, as she sat and knitted before the fire, secretly felt that she was cut off from the rest of the world. She missed Dick, who had always come back from Ivanwold with a message from Deborah, or else with something bright and interesting to tell ; but perhaps she missed Jared more than Dick, for during the previous winter he had been wont to come tramping in with some spice of neighborhood gossip. Even in the worst weather he always managed to get to First-Day Meeting, and she invariably received on his return messages, books and a whole budget of news.

The sole bright days of the present winter to her were the days of the arrival of Dick's letters, which came usually addressed to her. They were full of his work and of the people he was brought in contact with. Occasionally there was mention of dinners and names of distinguished men and women whom he met there. Finally, in one of his letters was an enthusiastic account of a renewal of acquaintance with his mother's relatives, and particularly of some charming cousins whom he said he had forgotten were so delightful and cultivated ; and this was followed by a glowing eulogy on American women generally. Then there came quite a gap in his letters. At last, early in April, he wrote that in a few weeks he should go West with an expedition which was going into the field for some months. Dorothea had been worried ever since the arrival of the letter with the account of the charming cousins.

She felt glad that Dick was going into the field, for she remembered the worldly family to which Dick's mother had belonged. She thought of Henry's life, wrecked by this same worldliness, and she grew faint within as she thought of Dick exposed to the same influences. She did not take into account the difference between the two men : Henry quiet and dreamy, fascinated by what was so utterly new to him, so different from his quaint home and its surroundings ; Dick, on the contrary, cool and perfectly familiar with the manners and usages of the great world, undazzled, unattracted and already heart-fettered.

As for Robin, she too thought of her cousin. She had been studying him during the long, quiet weeks of winter, and had been judging him dispassionately, as an outsider might do. She went over his boyhood as she imperfectly remembered it. She recalled many generous, boyish traits. One scene always stood out from the rest, and she thrilled, as she had done then, when she had sat on the top rail of the fence and saw him conquer Comanche ; saw and felt again the power of human mind and will over brute strength. She thought of his years of absence which had seemed to them so selfish, and she thought what they had been to him, full of study and research. She thought of his mind, his work, his attainments ; what an intellectual stimulant he had been to her during the weeks he had been at Airlie. She measured him with Evan Massie, the only other intellectual man she had

ever-known. Evan perhaps possessed in some directions a more profound mind, perhaps a deeper knowledge, but it was the knowledge that was bound down by books by minds that had gone before. Dick wasted no time on theories, no time in idle speculations : his was the broad mind of culture, of experience, of observation, of thinking out and grasping what was true and letting the rest go. In the branches of science to which his heart and mind were given he was brilliant and learned. She ran over her talks with him and the many arguments they had had upon the question of woman. He could not be said to be in sympathy with her view of that question ; he was even opposed to it ; but how different his opposition from Jared's, who had a "sphere" for woman in which he kept her under lock and key—poor Jared ! But Dick was rational, even liberal. It was a new question to him ; he would probably never accept it, but he would be tolerant and just. Then she thought of the scene in the sitting-room when he first came home from Germany and in his impetuosity had wanted to take the debts on the place and pay them off, and then had offered to marry her in order to take care of her mother and herself. At the memory of it there burned in her eyes a deep, steady light. She knew that she was facing a problem and had been facing one for months, although unacknowledged till now.

Sometimes she had gone off alone with her books in order to shut out for a few hours each day the haunting

words which her cousin had suddenly uttered the night before he went away : " Do you need me ? do you want me to stay ? " These words had followed her all about, through her tasks at the house, to the dairy and the stables ; they would persistently come between her eyes and the pages of the book, until one day she suddenly turned resolutely and faced her inner self. She said : " Robin, thee has been repeating to thyself these words over and over again ; now let us face them and have done with it ; let us answer them frankly, honestly, and, no matter what the consequences are, abide by the answer." Thus she sternly communed with herself. She sat in utter quiet, taking up the arguments, the self-questionings, and squarely facing the situation. In the first place, what did Dick really mean when he said, " Do you need me ? " What did he have in mind ? Did he mean, as she had quickly fancied at the time, the usual pecuniary dependent need of a woman for a man ? She remembered the ring in his voice, the light in his face, as he had asked her the question, and the answer came promptly, " No, he meant it in its deeper sense. He meant what a man means when he feels that need himself, when he stands face to face with the woman he loves." As she said this to herself a faint color came to her quiet face. Now the question for her to answer was, " Did she need Dick ? did she want him to stay ? " How was she to answer herself ? It was a mighty thing to do battle with ; she would go

back a little, and ask herself a few questions. "How and by what means had it come about that she was obliged to face herself thus? why was she having to question her heart, and pry into its recesses? She had never had to do so before. Had there been any thing lacking in her daily life? had she ever felt the need to lean on any one? had she ever been discontented, or wanted any thing fuller or more complete?" And promptly came the answer, "No." "Was she dissatisfied with her work on the farm? had her ambition given out? A thousand times No! What then had made a change? why should Dick's words ring in her ears? why should she remember the expression of his face?" She thought of Airlie, which had been in the family for generations. She thought of her mother, whose happiest days had been spent there. Did she wish to bring about any change? She knew that the custom of marriage forced a woman to give up home, kindred, work, individuality, every thing, and follow a man through the wide world, no matter where he might choose to pitch his tent. Could she do it? No; her duty was at Airlie, her work was on the farm, her duty was plain; she was her father's son. Then she smiled to think how her thoughts had roamed. She was happy in the old home. In the years to come she should be free from debt. There was no question of marriage with any one, no thought of breaking up the old home. She needed no one, no aid. She certainly would not marry for any

such reason. She felt that she had finally reached her conclusion. She said to herself firmly: "No, Cousin Dick, I do not need thee." She held herself erect with a quiet, determined look upon her face ; then her expression changed. Her answer was a true answer so far as it went, but suddenly she laid her head down upon her arms, and above all her questions and arguments rang out triumphantly in her heart the truth. She could not stifle it, nor put it away, nor get round it ; she must face it, as she had told herself she would do, honestly and frankly ; she loved him !

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE VILLAGE WEDDING.

FOR the few weeks following Robin's self-questionings and final surrendering to herself, she went about the house and farm with a light, buoyant step, and with eyes that lighted up with joyous smiles, quickly changing to deep, tender gravity. Her mother noticed the look more than once and said finally :

"What is it, daughter?"

"What does thee mean, mother?"

"Thee looks as if thee had had news of some sort, tell me about it."

"Well, mother, I think I am glad to see the spring come, and to feel the new life which comes with it," she replied.

Dorothea wondered if there lurked any meaning in her words more than met the ear, but the daughter quietly went on to give an account of the work which had already begun with the early opening of the spring. April was well advanced, the ploughing and early plantings were in progress, and the young farmer had her

hands full. She felt a certain confidence in herself which hitherto had not been wholly present. She had a conviction that her farming had passed beyond mere experiment ; she had gained in the two years a practical experience, which, added to her own natural quick judgment and untiring energy, made her look forward hopefully to the future of the farm. She missed Jared's efficient work on the place. His own go-ahead way of accomplishing things had relieved her of a good deal of responsibility, which now rested wholly upon her own shoulders ; but the new man proved very capable and intelligent, and the girl felt that never had a season opened better, never had Airlie seemed so beautiful as when it unfolded day by day its soft, leafy foliage ; never had the carpet of violets on the lawn seemed so blue, never had the young chickens seemed so downy ; never had she felt the beauty of the world as to-day. Kane remarked to her :

"'Deed, Miss Rob, you 's as peart and live-li-like as a cricket."

"Who would n't be in this glorious weather ?" she returned.

Kane propped himself on his stick in his favorite way and eyed her suspiciously. He had his own notions of things.

April went out in a cloud of apple-blossoms and May was ushered in with roses and early locust-bloom. The old trees burst into a perfect wilderness of blossoms long before their usual time, and the whole lane was a hang-

ing-garden of white scented flowers. Towards the end of May, when the weather was almost oppressive in its summer-like heat, Harmony came from The Hatch. She had been over frequently to consult Dorothea and Robin about the preparations for her wedding. The mysteries of the trousseau had been attended to in town, but the management of the ceremonies at the little church in Airlie village, the getting back in good order to The Hatch afterwards for the big gathering and the wedding-breakfast, of which the whole neighborhood would partake, were matters which Harmony thought needed an older head and better executive powers than she possessed. So she was to be seen driving up the lane at all hours of the day, hitching her horse, giving a call, then waiting to be answered before proceeding to the garden, the house, or the barn, as the case might be. This special morning she had had to go further in search of her chief adviser, who had not responded to her usual call. She bent her steps to the dairy, where a few moments later the two girls were sitting in the shade of the building, one on the milking-stool, one on an inverted stone crock, and the ever-fascinating, all-absorbing topic was under full discussion.

"Then you really think, Robin, that Miss Deborah would be willing to come and take charge of the wedding-breakfast?"

"I am sure of it, Harmony. Cousin Deb has plenty of time, and she would like nothing better."

"Well, then, that is settled. Now, about your gown as

bridesmaid, Robin ; have you thought about it yet ? You know it is to be my gift to you, and I will not hearken to any refusal."

"Oh ! Harmony, dear, do you really want me ?" and she looked wistfully into her friend's eyes. Then she continued : "Just see how burned and tanned I am. I shall feel as I stand at the altar of the little church like a big striped yellow and black tiger-lily stuck in a nosegay of Puritan roses."

"Nonsense," said Harmony, "you will be lovely if you will let me have my way. You shall wear soft, white china silk, made simple and plain, and a large, picturesque white hat."

"Oh ! Harmony, not a hat for a bridesmaid, surely ?"

"Yes, a hat," emphasized Harmony, who had just come from town, and who knew of what she was talking. Robin said no more ; she felt that in the realms of fashion she was out of place.

"By the way, Robin, have you heard when your cousin will return ? Henry and I are waiting anxiously to know ; we want him to be Henry's best man."

"No, I do not know. Cousin Dick has never spoken of returning yet," she gravely answered.

"Well, if we hear nothing in another week Henry will ask his cousin to come down from New York to take his place," said Harmony.

"Why not ask Thaddy to serve ?" asked Robin, demurely ; then both of them laughed. After a little more

talk Harmony took her leave, Robin accompanying her as far as the house.

The wedding was set for the twentieth of June. It was made as late in the month as was possible in the hope that Dick would be able to get in from the West in time ; and it could not well be left later than that date, for the harvest would be drawing on and every one in the neighborhood would be too busy to think of festivities. Dick finally wrote Standish that, having due regard to the plans of his party, it was uncertain about his reaching the neighborhood in time for the wedding, and that they had better not count upon him. So Standish's cousin was pressed into service, and all preparations were now complete. Nearly the whole neighborhood was asked to The Hatch, but only a few of the nearest friends were asked to go to the church. Every one had been deploring the marriage of Captain Esten's only daughter. They liked Standish well enough, but he was an outsider, while they had grown to look upon Harmony as one of themselves. When it was learned that the young couple were to return to The Hatch after a brief wedding-journey, and that they would spend most of their time in the future in the neighborhood, the feeling changed towards Standish : after all, he was not such a bad sort of fellow, and they prepared to enter into the wedding festivities with zest. They showed the most open and honest curiosity concerning all that was going on at The Hatch, and many were the speculations

as to whether Thaddy Watkins would be present. From the tragic airs he had given himself all during the winter, one might have supposed that he had been a favored suitor, thrown over at the last moment, instead of having been a mere dangler, who never had any chance whatever, and who knew it. But it pleased him to pose as an injured, blighted being. When Harmony was once married, he would undoubtedly lose no time in paying his devotions at the next vacant shrine. So the neighborhood laughed and gossiped.

When the wedding-day was at hand several of the young people transformed the vine-covered village church into a perfect bower, and every thing was ready for the morrow. That evening Robin had a fancy for going in person to the village for the mail. As soon as she heard the stage horn she started across the field towards Airlie. Presently Dorothea saw her leisurely sauntering back up the lane in the twilight, with the daily paper swinging carelessly in her hand.

“No letter from Richard, daughter?”

“No, mother, none.”

“I had hoped he would get here for the wedding to-morrow. Did thee think to ask whether any one came in the stage as far as Ivanwold?”

There was a faint confusion and slight hesitancy in Robin's manner for a moment, as if she were loath that even her mother should know that she had any undue interest in her cousin's arrival; so she answered hesitat-

ingly : " I inquired of the driver if any one came ; he said not."

The next day dawned bright and clear. The ceremony was to be at mid-day, and as the bridal procession would have to pass Airlie on its way from The Hatch, it had been decided that Robin and Dorothea should join it at the gate. Kane was to drive the two women in the old family carriage, which was so little used nowadays and was so rusty and dilapidated. When Robin was dressing she thought how out of keeping with her daily life the dainty finery was. It would have its brief day, then be laid away, and in a week's time no one who saw her in the harvest-field would think she could be the same woman. When she was ready, even to the drawing on of the long gloves, she hastened down to her mother, who had been waiting for a half hour or more. As she came before her she said :

" Mother, I should so like to look like other women to-day ; I should like to feel that I belong to the rest of the world, that for once I am——" She paused.

" What, daughter ? "

" Pretty," she said anxiously. " What does thee honestly think, mother ? "

" I think thee is a right fair sight for any eyes, daughter."

But there was something unsatisfactory to Robin in her mother's old-fashioned words of praise. She felt that she was dressed in an unusual way, that she was wearing

beautiful things, and she longed suddenly for words in keeping with her gown, and her youth : words which might be uttered with a meaning in them, a tenderness, a love, that was not mother-love. Then she rebuked herself for her wayward, unseemly thoughts. Kane now signalled from the stepping-stone that the carriages were in sight on the turnpike. The two women hastened to the carriage and were rapidly driven to the gate, where they waited to fall into line behind the bridal party. Thus they moved rapidly through Airlie village, and it seemed when they reached the shady churchyard that all the villagers were there assembled to see the bride go by. Henry Standish and his cousin were awaiting the party at the altar. Soon the little procession moved up the aisle, Robin walking alone, followed by Harmony upon her father's arm. The people had closed in densely about the doors, and the little porch was crowded with eager heads trying to catch a glimpse within.

When the solemn words of the service were half-over there was a slight stir at the door. It was a late comer, who, finding it would make a disturbance to force a way through the crowded porch, fell back to the shade of the trees. In a few moments a hasty movement in the crowd indicated that the benediction had been pronounced—the wedding was over. Soon Harmony appeared smiling and nodding to the familiar faces of the villagers, who admiringly fell back before Standish and herself. In a moment behind them Robin appeared with Standish's

cousin at her side. She too smiled and nodded to the well-known faces about her. She paused in the little porch to await the carriage and buried her face for a moment in the flowers she held in her hand ; then she was quickly driven away. The usual bustle and confusion of getting into the right carriages began. The crowd held back a little for the bridal party to get off ; then the stream of people poured out of the church and hurried away.

It had been arranged that Dorothea should part company with her daughter when the return to The Hatch set in from the church. So she drove away alone in the old carriage. The villagers began to file out of the churchyard, and among the last to leave was Deborah, who had waited to gather up some of the flowers from the chancel-rail. As she approached the light wagon which was ready to take her back to The Hatch and which already held several people, some one stepped out from the background of trees.

“ Let me help you, Deborah.”

She turned in amazement and exclaimed in a loud, startled voice :

“ Mercy alive ! where did thee come from, Dick Elgar ? ” She let drop the garlands she had held in her arms, put her hands on Dick’s shoulders, her face beaming with satisfaction, and poured upon him a perfect stream of questions : “ When did thee come ? why did n’t thee get here in time for the wedding ? Has

thee spoken with any one ? Did thee see Dorothea and Robin ? and where is thee going now ? ”

Meantime those in the wagon were watching and listening with ill-concealed curiosity. Dick noticed it, and finding it impossible to reply to Deborah's flood of eager questions, said in a low tone : “ I will follow you immediately to The Hatch and answer all your questions there.” He helped her quickly and without more ado into the wagon, restored the flowers to her and lifted his hat ; and there came floating back to him, as the carriage drove off, an energetic

“ Well, I never ! ” from Deborah.

Dick was left in almost sole possession of the churchyard. He felt irritated at the chain of circumstances which had left him stranded here, too late for every thing. He had been unfortunate all around. He had missed his trains at almost every point since he had started home. Instead of arriving the morning previous, or at latest the night before, and coming to the wedding with the rest, like a Christian, he had reached Ivanwold only that morning to find Deborah gone to The Hatch and no one on the whole place knowing exactly what the hour of the wedding was to be ; there was only a hazy idea that it was to be some time between eleven and one at the Airlie church, which was a good five or six miles off. He made up his mind that he would n't try to go at all. He had been travelling day and night ; he was tired and hungry ; he would be a fool to go hurrying off up there

at this late hour. Having made up his mind that he would turn in for several hours and sleep, he proceeded to carry out this sensible plan by jerking the bell violently, and upon the appearance of a maid, calling out sharply :

“If there 's any thing in the house, get me some breakfast, immediately. Send some one to me to hunt out my things, and order the cart to be brought round at once.”

In a short time he had made a hasty toilet, a still more hasty breakfast, and was swinging over the road at a rattling pace, to arrive at the little church just in time to stand back out of sight among the villagers and see the bride come out radiant and happy ; to see Standish with a look of proud possession put her tenderly into the carriage ; to see his cousin in soft gown and picturesque hat, lovely beyond what his mind had been fancying her, appear upon the arm of a stranger, stand a moment in the little porch, with a bunch of flowers held close to her face and a dreamy light in her eyes, and await the carriage which soon bore her quickly away. After that he had a vague idea of seeing his aunt also leave the church-porch, and not till the place was nearly deserted and Deborah came out prepared to go, had he collected himself sufficiently to come forward and make his presence known to her. When she too was gone there was nothing left for him but either to go home to Ivan-wold, or to go to The Hatch in pursuit of the wedding-

party, which perhaps he might overtake somewhere before the day was over if he had good luck. He drove leisurely back over the road he had just traversed in such haste. He glanced up the Airlie lane as he passed by and wondered what sort of a greeting from his cousin was in store for him ; or would it be his fate upon reaching The Hatch to fall immediately into the hands of all the good old Friends in the neighborhood and be obliged to tell each and all over and over just when he came, why he came so late, what detained him, and so on endlessly, until his cousin would perhaps be borne off and surrounded by others, and he would get no speech with her ? which would be a last and final calamity, adding a fresh link to an already long chain of delays and mishaps that had pursued him relentlessly ever since he had made up his mind to cut short his field work and hurry home to Standish's wedding.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONFESSION.

ALL the way to The Hatch Deborah was pondering over the astonishing and unexpected appearance of Dick in the churchyard. Why on earth should he have waited until the very last moment to reach home? and why had he not let some one know he was coming? Clearly, from the expression of his face, he was irritated and put out, but there was no one to blame but himself. She hurried the driver of the wagon; she was anxious to reach The Hatch and be the first to tell of his arrival. Then she suddenly made up her mind that she would say nothing about it; she would let Dick speak for himself, she had a pretty shrewd idea that he meant to speak. She would let him come upon Robin unawares; she would not prevent any possible advantage which might come to him from taking his cousin off her guard. Even Dorothea should not be told of his coming; she alone would know it, and be on the watch for the meeting of the cousins. Thinking thus, Deborah became very impatient to reach her destination. She feared every moment to see Dick's

high cart go flashing by on the road and thus spoil her anticipated little scene. Alas ! Deborah was doomed to disappointment ; she had hardly landed before the door of The Hatch when she was greeted with the doleful tidings from one of the domestics, that while they were all at church the hounds had somehow got out of their kennels, made their way into the milk-house, and eaten up a third of the salad. This was calamity ! Two hundred and fifty people at the very doors of The Hatch and a third of the salad gone ! All thought of a tender meeting and a possible settlement of affairs between the cousins was swept from Deborah's mind. She dropped the garlands and flowers she had so carefully brought from the church, and with a wild rush disappeared to the scene of the disaster.

Meanwhile every road and lane which led to The Hatch had a stream of approaching guests. Every sort of vehicle laden to its fullest drew up to the steps, until the spacious old house was overflowing with young and old, all bent on kissing the bride and doing justice to the good cheer which would be forthcoming. The porch and the lawn were soon full of groups of people who had strayed from the crowded house to the cool shade outside. Captain Esten wandered untiringly from one to another, shaking hands and making every one welcome. In the wide double parlor the bridal party stood receiving the comers and exchanging greetings with all. In vain had Harmony tried to keep her father at her side,

but he said it was not his idea of hospitality to stand for hours in one spot and let people hunt for him ; he preferred to do the hunting himself.

Robin had found it rather hard work to talk to the man at her side, who stood looking about him, half-amused by the scene, half-surprised at the people, now and then putting up an eyeglass to take in the surroundings more fully. He in turn had not known what to say to the unusually grave woman whom he saw for the first time that morning at the altar. He had an idea when he left New York that he was going to the backwoods, that he should no doubt encounter the natives. It would be a bore, but one could not leave a cousin in the lurch, even if he were fool enough to marry a country girl, in a country church, with the service read by a country parson. Therefore the whole day so far had been one of surprises to him. In the first place, the new cousin herself was almost charming enough to excuse the folly Standish had committed. Then The Hatch was picturesque and quaint beyond what he had fancied a Maryland farmhouse could possibly be ; it was quite manorial with its big pillars and wide porch. Certainly the tall, handsome bridesmaid, dressed in perfect fashion, was something even to make a club man turn out of his way to look at, and he wondered what manner of people he had fallen among. But somehow conversation was rather difficult with this same imposing young woman, who alternately said "thee" to the sweet-faced plain Friends and "you"

to most of the others. He thought he would stay a day or two with Captain Esten after the wedding was over, and learn something about these people who were such a mixture of simplicity and culture. Had he known that the girl at his side was a farmer, that she worked in the fields with her men, that she had never spent a season in town, had never seen a german, or a horse-race, had never been to Newport, nor heard of Tuxedo, and was in total ignorance of the general radiance and glory which the Gotham world unselfishly sheds upon every thing, he would not have believed it possible that the State of Maryland, unaided, could produce such a being in this enlightened nineteenth century ; he would have turned the full stare of his eyeglass upon her in amazement. But he did not know this. He could not make out what type of young woman she was, and the conversation, which was spasmodic and trying to both of them, suddenly took a turn for the better. Some mention was made of horses. Instantly Robin felt that she had a topic upon which they might meet on common ground. She told him of their hunts. He asked in surprise if it were possible that Quakers ever hunted. She in turn laughingly told him that her grandfather had not only been a preacher in Friends' Meeting but also one of the most daring, reckless fox-hunters in all the State ; that he had often hunted continuously for three days at a time, night as well as day ; that her own father had owned a famous pack of hounds, and that she herself was fond of the sport.

It seemed to the worldly Gothamite that the country wedding was revealing most refreshing and unexpected novelties. He smiled at the wide disparity between the cut-and-dried notion which the world entertains of the Quakers and the glimpse which the girl at his side had just given him. Verily, he said to himself, the followers of George Fox no longer believe in meekly-folded hands and downcast eyes. Decidedly, he would stay and investigate this community. From that time on Standish's cousin had no difficulty in finding topics of conversation. The bored air, which had been so manifest a little while before, vanished. Not for a moment did he turn away from the companion who had been till now so unapproachable. But an interruption came only too soon, and it was almost with a sense of irritation to him that a move of the bridal party to the dining-room took place.

Meanwhile Dick drove very slowly towards The Hatch. He even went a little out of his way to postpone the time of his arrival. He had been in a hurry ever since he had turned homewards from the West, and had missed connection at every point. He had reached Ivanwold to find no one there. He had been in hot haste to get to the church, and arrived there only to see the outside of the building and the stalwart backs of the villagers turned to him. Now he felt that it would make no difference at what hour he reached Captain Esten's. He hoped the guests would be so completely absorbed with the wedding-feast that his arrival would be unnoticed, that he would escape unquestioned. Great

was his chagrin, therefore, to come within sight of the place and find the shady lawn a perfect fête in appearance. Small tables were dotted about under the trees. Groups of idle, good-natured people were busily engaged in doing justice to the wedding-breakfast, but not one of them was so absorbed as to be oblivious of the approaching cart and its occupant. Dick took in the situation at a glance. He drew in his horse, handed over the reins, sprang down, and said to himself under his breath : " By George ! I 'm in for it."

Some one exclaimed : " Why, it is Dick Elgar."

Then the very thing he had been picturing dismally to himself took place. One after another rose up from the different groups to grasp his hand and ask the inevitable questions. As his eye ran over the crowd it was a relief to see none of the bridal party, but he realized with a sense of irritation that before he could reach the porch there was a perfect gauntlet of questions and handshakes to be run. He boldly advanced, as if to get through with it. Holding his hat in one hand and extending the other, he began his progress to the house, alternately passing from the shade of the trees into bright patches of sunlight, which fell upon his uncovered head, bronzed face, and strong muscular figure. His greeting to every one was cordial and pleasant ; it betrayed no inward unwillingness. His face wore a slight smile, but there was a tension about the eyes, a restlessness and sternness which did not belong to them properly. It might be

only the vexation of the delays he had encountered, and the fatigue of the long journey, but this unusual expression, so different from the frank, sunny look habitual to him, did not pass unnoticed. He was certainly a very striking man, and more than one turned a second time to look at the well-knit, powerful figure, the clearly-cut features, and strong face as he passed.

Dick made his way but slowly across the lawn, for he encountered a friendly face at every step. He came upon Evan Massie, and also upon Thaddy Watkins, who stood leaning against a tree, the very picture of disconsolate woe. Dick could not repress a smile as he saw Thaddy, and involuntarily there escaped him :

“You here, Watkins?”

“An’ why not, in the name of thun’er?” Thaddy answered fiercely; then unbending a little, he put out his hand, and said: “Did n’ know you were in this part of the worl’. Seen any of ’em? They ’re all in yon’er in the dinin’-room; an’ I tell you, Elgar, a weddin’ ’s all dam’ nonsense,” he suddenly wound up.

“Depends on whose wedding it is,” replied Dick, dryly, and prepared to move on; but Thaddy detained him to pour out a long tirade on the stupidity of the neighborhood and of the country generally, till Dick said impatiently :

“See here, Watkins, I must move on; I have n’t spoken to the bride yet.”

Thaddy fell back, and Dick hurried forward; this

time to be stopped by Captain Esten himself, who had just emerged from the house and caught sight of him. He was at his side instantly, saying heartily :

“ God bless my soul ! Dick Elgar, why did n't you get here sooner ? ”

Then the same explanation of detentions and mishaps had to be gone over to the Captain. As they talked they moved slowly up the steps and across the porch. At the very threshold of the house the Captain paused and entered upon a long account of how the hounds that very morning had eaten up the salad while they were all at church. Dick listened with only half an ear, and in the very midst of the Captain's tale he suddenly muttered some excuse, left his side, and strode into the hall, paying no heed to those whom he met, and who stood aside as he hurried past them. The tones of a voice had fallen upon his ears, and taking matters into his own hands he broke from the Captain, to follow where it led. The Captain stood in the doorway in open-eyed wonder at the sudden and not very polite move of his companion. He looked after the retreating figure, and before it reached the bend in the hall which led to the dining-room he saw Dick pause a moment, straighten himself, compress his lips slightly, then carelessly walk on and disappear.

When Dick turned the bend in the hall he came upon Harmony and Standish, who were just coming from the dining-room, beyond which there was a glimpse through

the open door of the rest of the bridal party. Their exclamations of surprise and delight were many, and for a few moments there was a confusion of congratulations, good wishes, and light, bantering words. Robin stood with her back to the door, facing Standish's cousin, who had never left her side for a moment, and who was talking animatedly to her as he leaned on the back of a chair. When the first exclamations of surprise from those at the door fell upon her ear, and were followed by the repetition of her cousin's name, uttered by every voice in a different key, she stood perfectly rigid. She did not hear the remarks of her companion. A deep flush slowly spread over her face and neck ; there was an instant when her lips trembled. If she turned ever so slightly she would face her cousin ; she could hear his clear, pleasant voice lightly bantering Standish. She must welcome him. She turned slowly towards the door and saw his bronzed and slightly worn face, found his gaze bent upon her, and caught the deep intensity of his eyes. For a moment she faced him, fearlessly returned his glance, and gave him back the answer she had carried so long in her heart ; then her eyes dropped, the flush died out of her face, leaving her pale and quiet. Dick had seen her turn towards him ; he had seen and read the look which leaped to her eyes in answer to his own, and when she dropped them he hurried forward to her side, a perfect tumult raging within, but outwardly cool. He shook hands, made a conven-

tional remark or two, and was introduced to Standish's cousin, who had not been blind to the changes of expression which had swept over his companion's face ; but he had not seen the look in her eyes which was causing Dick the hardest moments of struggle for self-control that he had ever been called upon to endure.

The conversation for a time was difficult. Robin felt shaken, almost stunned ; something had happened which she could never undo, and for a moment there was a wave of hot rebellion. She felt like a young soldier who has been surprised beyond the picket lines, who has just surrendered his musket and stands defenceless in the presence of the enemy. She stole a quick glance at Dick, who stood before her so quiet and composed. There was nothing of the conqueror in his manner. He even refrained from looking at her, and addressed himself to her companion. The sudden feeling of rebellion and unrest which had swept over her when she feared she had laid down her arms too suddenly was quelled ; the peace and happiness of his presence stole over her and was unspeakable. Dick himself, though talking so quietly, felt every throb of his heart, every pulsation to his finger-tips. It was almost more than he could do to stand unmoved and talk of casual things when the memory of her eyes was thrilling him through and through. He hesitated how to proceed. He had seen the signal of distress in his cousin's manner when he reached her side,

and he forebore to press his advantage. What course should he now pursue? Should he woo her gently to further and fuller love? or should he boldly seize upon his happiness and give her no time to deny what her eyes had spoken? But there was no opportunity even for speech at present, nor could he win another look from her. He must wait. A moment later Robin was called. The going-away time had arrived, and Harmony needed her offices. Both men walked with her to the foot of the stairs. Standish's cousin said, just as she was about to leave them :

"Do not forget, Miss Elgar, you have promised to show me the kennels when the Standishes get off."

Was it possible, she asked herself, that she had made any such promise? but she replied, "I will not forget."

Then Dick laid his hand on the baluster and asked :

"Where is Aunt Dorothea?"

She stood two or three steps above him, and as he asked the question she was compelled to look down into his upturned eyes. There was such a depth of love and tenderness in them that for a moment she stood enthralled. Then she remembered his question. She remembered also that Standish's cousin was looking on. She gathered her wits and said lightly :

"Oh, mother went off some time ago to help Cousin Deborah," and she sped up the stairs without a backward glance.

Dick turned and caught a quick, puzzled look on the

other man's face. Then they commenced some trivial conversation and walked towards the open door, where Standish stood watching the bestowal of the luggage which was ready to be sent ahead.

At this point Deborah came through the hall and bore down upon him. She was followed slowly by Dorothea, whose step was always uncertain. The meeting of the three was a warm one. In a few minutes Dick and his aunt had seated themselves a little apart and were talking earnestly. The departure of the guests had set in some little time before, and now only a few remained for the final leave-taking of the bridal party. When Harmony and Robin came down-stairs again the afternoon was advanced and The Hatch had undergone a change. The tables on the lawn had disappeared. The Captain, with only a small group about him, stood ready to speed the parting bride. There were tears in Robin's eyes as she thought how hard it must be for this motherless girl to leave her home. But the Captain was no encourager of tears, so the only ones shed were those in her eyes, and a few which Standish wiped from Harmony's cheek after they had driven away.

The party left on the lawn was a silent one. The Captain watched the receding carriage till it was lost to view, and there was a suspicious trembling of his lips when he at last turned ; but there was no tremble in his voice ; he said heartily :

" Well, I don't know how the rest of you feel, but in

spite of the wedding-breakfast I have n't had a good square meal to-day. Miss Deborah, have you got any thing left?"

This confession of the Captain's produced a light laugh, and also a like confession from several of the others. So the entire party adjourned to the dining-room, where a substantial luncheon was soon in progress. Dick seated himself beside his cousin. He had seen the tears in her eyes when Harmony had driven away. He felt that he understood them and the mood which called them forth. They had been partly shed for the departing bride, but they had also been shed for herself. She had suddenly realized away in the background of her thoughts what it would mean to leave her mother, her home, and go forth in like manner. He turned suddenly and looked at her. She still wore the picturesque hat she had worn to the church in the morning. Dick could not see her eyes as she drooped her head, but he could see the outline of her cheek, the full curve of the lips, and the sheen of her hair, drawn back in soft masses under her hat. He noticed with fastidious eyes the perfect folds of the clinging white gown; then he recalled the look which had shone steadily for a moment in her eyes, and he was filled with a passionate longing to see them once again looking into his, and to hear from her lips the pledge they had given silently. Would the interminable day never be over? Would he never win a look or word from her again? He bent his head and said to her in a low tone :

"Robin, may I drive you to Airlie when you are ready to go?"

She looked up and bravely met his glance. She would neither avoid his eyes, nor yet allow her own to betray her a second time. She said in a tone of cousinly concern :

"Why, Cousin Dick, thee looks very weary after thy long journey. Surely thee would not take all that unnecessary drive to Airlie?"

"But I would, though," he replied, with a flash in his eyes ; then he added :

"You have not said whether I may drive you or not?"

"I think I had better go back with mother in the carriage ; she would be left to take the drive alone," she said gently, though with cool decision.

Dick's face flushed slightly. He drew back. He would neither demur nor urge her to go ; he could not, indeed, unless he wished all the room to hear. In a few moments there was a stir in the dining-room. Then Standish's cousin crossed to Robin's side and reminded her of the promise to show him the kennels. She rose reluctantly and said hesitatingly :

"Would thee care to come, Dick?"

"Thanks, cousin, I think I must utilize the remaining time in finding out Deborah's plans and movements," he said pleasantly and turned away.

In little less than an hour all the rest of the guests, save those who were staying at The Hatch, were ready

to depart. Dorothea was already seated in the Airlie carriage and Robin was about to follow, when her mother said :

“ Richard, is n't thee going back with us ? I 've been counting on it ; do thee get in with us and let thy groom bring thy cart over. We can put thee up and thy man too. Do come ? ”

Dick made no answer for a moment. Then Robin turned and said softly :

“ Will thee not come, Cousin Dick ? ”

Dick looked her squarely in the eyes, as if seeking to understand her. He wondered how long and how far a man must sue for a woman's love. Then he replied gravely :

“ I will drive over later, possibly. ” He lifted his hat. The door was shut with a snap, and the carriage moved on.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"WAS 'T NOT TO THIS END?"

Much Ado about Nothing.

THE sun was just setting when Dorothea and Robin reached Airrie. But there was a distinct feeling in Robin's heart that, although the sun was nearly down, the day was not over for her; perhaps it was only about to begin. She experienced the reaction and restlessness which follow upon any long-anticipated event when it is finally over. She was still in gala-dress and had several hours to dispose of. What should she do with them? She took off her hat on the porch and lingered a moment. Then she made a decided move towards the stairway. Dorothea said:

"What is thee going to do, daughter?"

"I am going to take off my gown. I must go out and see the men; there are several things I must attend to." As she spoke she looked down at the gown and touched it softly. It was so pretty she was loath to lay it aside.

"Robin, cannot the men be left for one evening? Cannot thee stay in peace with me?"

"Why, yes, mother," she answered hesitatingly, turning away from the stairs and coming back to the porch ; then she said :

"When the men come in to their supper I will just speak to them and will not go out myself" ; but there was an anxiety in her tone, a restlessness in her manner very unusual to her. Dorothea shrewdly guessed that some crisis was at hand, and she sighed as she thought that she could not help her. She should have to let her daughter meet it alone and work it out in her own way.

They went in presently and made a pretence of having tea. Afterwards they sat on the porch through the gathering twilight with only occasional remarks passing between them. Neither mentioned Dick, though each had him in her mind and on her lips. At last Robin rose and passed through the house to the back porch, where the hands were smoking their evening pipes. She had some question, some instruction for each man ; then she went down the high flight of steps and towards the silent garden. She walked up and down each of the paths, gathering absently a flower or two from some bush which loomed up, scarcely distinguishable in the soft summer night. She sat a moment on the bench under the old pear-tree and leaned against its gnarled trunk ; then restlessly rose, left the garden, and skirting the house, went across the lawn and down the lane.

Dorothea caught a faint gleam of her white gown, then she was completely lost and swallowed up

in the deep shadows of the trees. Robin went to a favorite seat under one of the old locust-trees. She could not be distinguished readily in the surrounding gloom, for the road which led up the lane did not pass very near to her retreat. Here she gave herself up to her conflicting thoughts, with only the chirping sounds of the insect world, the faint light from the village, and the tinkle of a cow-bell in the meadow for distractions. She knew that a meeting with her cousin was imminent, and she felt the hot color in her face as she remembered the look of love in his eyes ; and, oh, shame ! the unreserved look she had given back in answer. She knew he might be here any moment to claim something besides a mere look from her ; yet she remembered the grave expression on his face when they parted at The Hatch. Would he come ? and how was she to meet him ? If he drove up the lane she would stay in the safe shelter of the old tree till he reached the house ; then she would go forth and meet him on the porch in the sheltering presence of her mother.

In a few moments her keenly-strained ears caught the rattle of an approaching light vehicle. She lost the sound for a moment, then it rose again loud and clear. She peered out from behind the tree ; yes, it was her cousin's cart which rattled on past her to the house. Then all was still. She breathed freely. She would not give him time to come in search of her ; she would follow at once. She rose from the bench and made a

step or two forward, when she caught the light tread of some one coming hastily over the grass from the gate. It was one of the men coming back from the village ; she could discern him plainly. She drew back to wait until he passed. But the man had seen her. He paused an instant as if startled by the gleam of her white gown coming out so unexpectedly from the trees ; then with a quick exclamation, and a quicker stride, he was at her side, and before she could shrink away her hands were seized and held in a strong clasp ; a face was bent to hers. She made a move to free herself, but in vain ; she had just spirit enough left to say tremulously :

" I thought thee went by in the cart just now, Dick ? "

" I had a fancy for walking up the lane," he replied, trying to trace her features in the darkness and read the expression of her face. She made another ineffectual move to free her hands, but he held them fast, and said in a low, resolute tone :

" I will not let you go from me again." He paused, then went on in a quiet voice : " When I parted from you years ago as a boy, to go to Germany, I can remember many a time during my student days of feeling your little arms clinging about my neck, and I can recall the homesick feeling which would come over me till the years of study and work made the memory dim. Then afterwards I came upon Standish one cool April night. He told me of my far-away cousin who was so brave and so beautiful, and I can feel now the sudden leap in my

heart. He left me, and after all those years I heard again your tremulous, childish voice, and felt your arms tightening about my neck, as they had done in parting. From that time until I reached America, I thought of nothing, night and day, but of coming home to you, of taking your burdens off your shoulders. When I saw you for the first time in the dairy door, I knew instantly it would be only a matter of time before I should be a suppliant for your love. The next day you refused my help and myself as well. You little dreamed that it was passion which had suddenly leaped all bounds, and caused me to offer myself and be rejected. Since then I have had no moment, sleeping or waking, when your face has not been before me, when I have not wanted your love. I have tried to win it. Many a day I have seen you toil in the fields with your men, and cursed the uselessness of my money. I have longed to put you aside in some sheltered spot and take your work on my own shoulders. At last I went away from you almost in despair. To-day I came back—"

He paused for a moment. Every word he uttered had fallen upon her heart. She made a movement, but he broke in passionately :

"I will let you go from me if you wish, but it will be to gather you in my arms and hold you more closely still. Do you think any thing but the memory of your face as you turned it to me to-day has brought me here to-night? Do you think any thing but that chattering

crowd at The Hatch kept me from telling you then and there that I love you, and claiming on the spot the promise your eyes had given ? No, I am not to be put off now, when I have had a divine glimpse of your heart. I will never let you go from me until I hear with your heart and lips on mine that you love me."

He had gradually tightened his clasp upon her hands until the pressure was almost painful. His head was eagerly bent in anxious waiting.

Dick's words swept over Robin like a torrent. Every one of them found an echo in her heart, and as she felt her love rise up in its might in answer to his, she lifted her face quickly in the soft summer night, and he would have seen her heart in her eyes save for the darkness. But he saw the lifting of the head, and his eager love divined the rest. He loosened her hands at last, but only to gather her impetuously in his arms and hold her closely to him, his lips alternately murmuring tender words of endearment and pressed to hers again and again in passionate fervor. He asked in a low tone :

" Did you dream all that your eyes said to me this morning, Robin ? "

" Dick," she answered, " when thee came upon me so suddenly I could not help showing thee truly what was in my heart ; it had been there so long," she concluded with a touch of shyness.

" How long ? " he murmured.

" I do not know," she said, " unless always. When I told

thee last winter, just before thee went away, that I did not need thee, it was partly true ; I had not understood thee was asking for my love."

"And if I had put my question differently you would have given me your love then?" he asked relentlessly.

She did not answer, and the pause was eloquent.

"My little cousin," he said tenderly, "how could it be possible for you to mistake me for an instant? I have never once been in your presence since I came from Germany without showing plainly that I loved you. Why, it has been patent to every one else for months."

"But, Dick, when thee asked me that night if I needed thee, I had just recalled to thee my debts, and my pride rose in arms, as I thought thee was going to offer me pecuniary aid, as thee had done once before. Thee had scarcely turned away when I knew thee meant to offer me thy love. Thee sees," she continued wistfully, "I have led such a different life from most girls, I have never had time nor thought for such things. I have had a son's place to fill. I have had debt and poverty to contend with, and I have a pride equal to thine. When thee came from Germany I could only think of thee as my rich foreign cousin, and when thee so masterfully wanted to take matters out of my hands, wanted to buy up our debts, and finally offered to marry me, I resented it ; I could not dream thee wanted any thing but to have thy own way. Afterwards, when I thought about it, and saw how pained thee was because I worked out on the farm, I

realized thee was not changed, thee was the same Dick, and it was pure generosity and chivalry towards thy two lonely kinswomen that made thee offer thyself. From that time there came back to me the old childish feeling of trust. And, Dick," she went on quaintly, "the little girl who used to come to thee with all her joys and woes and the cousin thee came home to find are both here. They claim no kin with the young woman who rejected thee in the sitting-room. We both—"

"We both—what?" he asked gently.

"What need to say it, Dick?" she said softly.

What need was there indeed, with the soft night around them and her face so near to his?

"Miss Rob! oh, Miss Rob!" rang out a voice startlingly from the lawn, "Miss Dorothy say why 'n't you come in?"

"I am coming, Joppa."

They turned and walked slowly through the lovely summer night. Never had it taken so long to go from the locust-tree to the porch, and the low murmurs of their voices as they approached told Dorothea that a love had been given and accepted.

"Mother, is thee here?" said Robin.

"Yes, daughter; I was worried because I heard something come up the lane long ago, and yet no one came to the house. I did not understand it, so I sent Joppa to look for thee."

There was something of anxiety in Dorothea's tone.

Dick went hastily to her side and said, with the old boyish ring in his voice : " Aunt Dorothy, do you remember that I asked you a year ago if you would object to me as a son ? Have you kept the place you promised me then ? "

Dorothea rose to her feet when she heard in Dick's voice and words the realization of her mother's hopes.

" Yes, Richard, I have kept the promised place and I am ready to welcome thee to it," she said as he stooped to kiss her cheek.

Then she turned to Robin. " And thee, my child ? " she asked in tender solicitude.

Robin stroked her mother's hand, then broke out suddenly : " Mother, does thee mean that thee and Dick conspired against me a whole year ago ? "

Dick turned to her quickly and said tenderly : " It was no conspiracy, Robin. The day after your scornful rejection in the sitting-room, Aunt Dorothea took me to task for my madness, and I told her that I loved you and meant to win you if I could. If I remember aright, she thought I was demented and told me so."

" But how did mother manage to keep it to herself all this time ? " Robin asked in bewilderment.

" Daughter, Richard confided his secret to me in justification of his rash offer. I had no right to tell thee."

Robin laughed softly as she said : " Oh, mother dear, I am afraid thee is wily ; I think I see a tiny trail of the serpent under all thy stern secrecy."

Dorothea laughed a little as if convicted. Then for a short time they sat on the porch and talked, until she rose and quietly groped her way into the house and left them, with Adsum and Gilbert's old chair in the corner the only listeners to their words.

When Dick rose to go at last and they stood under the eaves at parting, he raised her face to his and said :

" You have grown silent. Have I wearied you ? "

She smiled gravely to herself in the dark and tried to shake off the quiet mood which had been gradually stealing over her. Dick thought he understood the feeling which had kept her silent for a time. It was akin to the tears she had had in her eyes when Harmony went away from her home that morning. And he parted from her quietly, with the utmost tenderness, his parting kiss only upon her hands.

The next morning he rode back to Airlie in a joyous mood. He found that his cousin had gone to the dairy, whither he went immediately in search of her. Robin heard the click of the gate and her heart stood still. It was harder to meet Dick to-day than it had been the night before on the lawn. She leaned against the table ; there was a look of shy expectancy and something of anxiousness and uncertainty on her face. But when he appeared in the doorway there was such a sense of cool strength about him, such a light in his eyes, that her face lost its fleeting expression of doubt. She put out her hands in joyous welcome.

But Dick had seen the look of uncertainty, of wistful-

ness in her eyes as he entered. He held her hands and looked in her face. Was it possible after all that he had not won her? He remembered her silence at parting the night before. He studied her anxiously with almost growing fear.

"What is it, Robin?" he asked at last tenderly.

"Thee is fanciful, Dick," she returned lightly. Dick eyed her keenly for a moment or two. Was he fanciful, he wondered, or was there something in her heart which she held back from him? He leaned his arms upon the dairy table and watched her weigh out the golden butter and deftly mold it into little squares all of exact shape.

* * * * *

In a few days the harvest drew on and Dick could have only a moment with her, snatched here and there from her work in the field, or in the evenings when she was jaded from the long day of unceasing toil. During these days he was very restless and miserable. Her pride was so great that he could not interfere nor offer any help. And as from time to time he caught the same fleeting expression of doubt and uncertainty in her eyes, he determined to press for an immediate marriage.

One evening when he was sure the harvest was over, he went to Airlie and found Robin out in the garden. She was sitting under the old pear-tree, leaning against its trunk. He stood a moment and watched her. She was in deep thought. He saw her eyes fixed wistfully upon the distant fields, then wander to the house, taking

in each dearly-loved thing. And in that gaze he divined the trouble in her mind and heart. He approached her and taking her hands looked down into her eyes and said sadly :

" You could have trusted me utterly, Robin."

" Dick, I do trust thee utterly," she said, with faint surprise.

He went on : " I read in your wistful eyes just now as you looked all over the place the trouble in your heart. You have been seeing the old home broken up, Airlie in the hands of strangers, your work all for naught, yourself wandering in a foreign land with me, your mother pining in a strange home. Oh, my love ! you could have trusted me," he said, with pain in his eyes. Then he asked curiously : " Could you have made this sacrifice, Robin ? "

" Yes," she said, though her face was pale ; then she went on firmly : " There would be much bitterness to me in abandoning my work, in going away from the old home and never realizing the hopes I have of its future, but it would be the very bitterness of death to me to have Airlie, with thee gone out of my life."

Dick folded his arms about her with infinite tenderness.

" Dick," she said wistfully, " does thee think it unnatural for me to think so much of the old home, to have so much interest in the work I have undertaken, and to wonder how it will be with Airlie when I am

gone?" There was a moment of silence, then Dick said :

"My dearest heart, while you have been picturing Airlie abandoned and dismal, I have been seeing it in quite another light. I have seen the old farm a model estate, perfect in every detail. I have seen the house restored to its early glory, with Aunt Dorothy living out a good old age in peace and plenty, and yourself the presiding spirit over all. I have seen myself an humble appendage allowed to hang up my hat in your hall when I come home from my travels, or perhaps permitted, as a special indulgence, to bring in my bits of stone, rocks, and herbs, and put them away somewhere out of sight."

Dick laughed mischievously as he finished and saw the light beginning to dawn in Robin's eyes.

"Thee means, Dick," she said in a low tone, "that thee would make a sacrifice?"

"No, Robin, there would be no talk of sacrifice," he said earnestly; "I have been a wanderer nearly all my life; I have no home, no ties; therefore there can be no sacrifice. I have no affection for any place unless it be Airlie. You have undertaken to bring up this farm to the old flourishing state; I see no reason why you should not carry out your plan. You have a work which cannot be carried out anywhere but here; my work can be done anywhere on the globe. And if I can come back to you always, what do I care where the place may be so long as it holds you and you are content?"

" Oh, Cousin Dick ! " was all Robin could say, and the quick tears sprang to her eyes. She buried her face upon his breast, as she had been wont to do when she was a child. She lifted her face to ask presently :

" And Ivanwold ? "

" I do not know just what I would do with Ivanwold ; rent it, perhaps ; I would provide for Deborah, of course. "

Robin looked gravely into his eyes, then slowly said :

" Dick, it is a generous, noble plan, but it will not do. It would be a sacrifice, no matter how little thee would regard it as such. "

" And yet, " he said, " you would make even a greater sacrifice, which might perhaps bring misery and discontent in its train ? No, believe me, I have thought it out well, and my plan is the best for the happiness of us all. And "—he bent his head to read her face—" especially is it best for the happiness of the dearest one on earth to me—Uncle Gilbert's son. "

* * * * *

In the early days of autumn there was a wedding at Airlie. Every familiar face in the neighborhood was present. When the simple words of the Friend's marriage were solemnly uttered in the old sitting-room which had been the scene of so many events, Dorothea was carried back to the day when Gilbert had stood before her in this same room, and with the terrible confession of his own overmastering temptation upon his lips had

recalled these very words. As she thought of him and of their own wedding-day she saw Gilbert in fancy standing at her side, and she heard him repeat the solemn words in unison with Dick's heartfelt tones :

"In the presence of the Lord and before this assembly, I take Dorothea to be my wife, promising with Divine assistance to be unto her a loving and faithful husband until death shall separate us."

And then with a tear upon her cheek, she brought herself back to the joyous present.

And as the last words of the marriage died away, and her loving glance fell upon the wedded pair, sitting side by side, with the deep, silent grace of the Friends resting upon them and upon the hushed room, she saw the light in her daughter's eyes, and the reverent joy in Dick's face, and there went up from her heart a thanksgiving for the love and happiness that had fallen upon Airlie.

THE END.

Princeton University Library



32101 064788191

